EERIE #23 SEPT.

EERIE

PDC

A WARREN MAGAZINE

WHAT DEATHLESS SECRETS FILL THE CATACOMBS -- BEYOND NEFERA'S TOMB?

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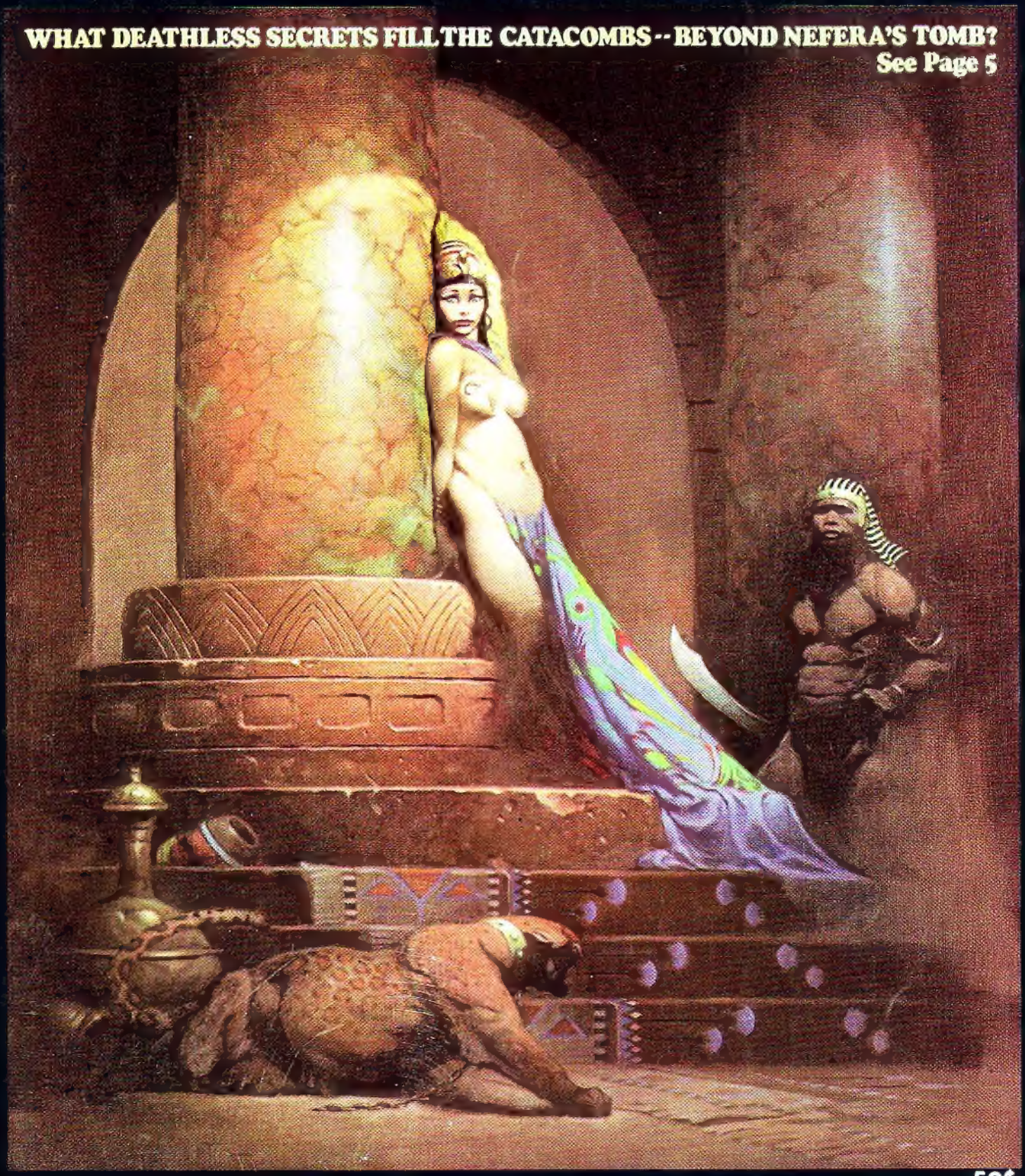

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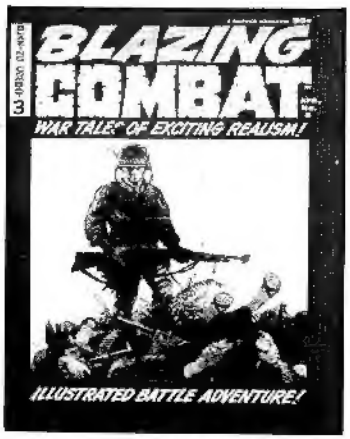

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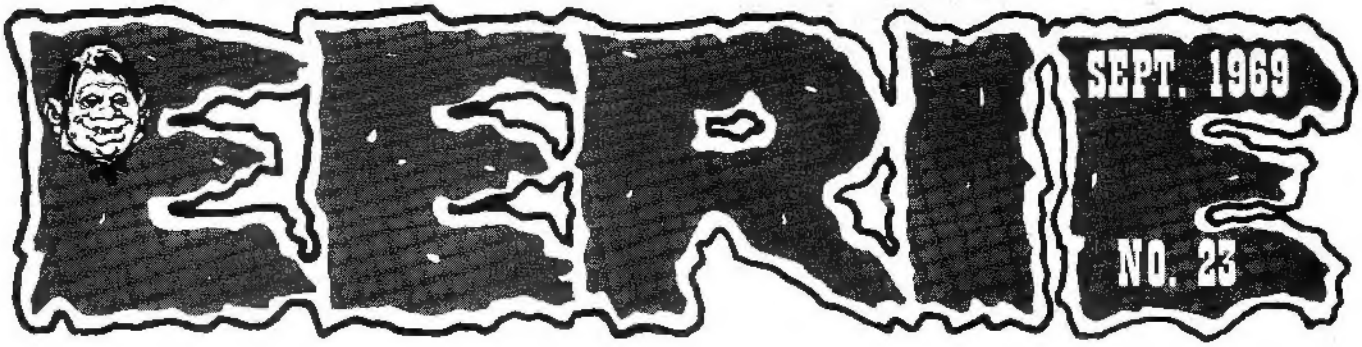

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COVER: FRANK FRAZETTA **ARTISTS THIS ISSUE:** ERNIE COLON, TOM SUTTON, TONY WILLIAMSUNE, MIKE ROYER, BOB JENNEY, NEAL ADAMS **WRITERS THIS ISSUE:** ARCHIE GOODWIN, BILL PARENTE, EDWARD E. FRENCH, KIM BALL, JAMES HAGGENMILLER

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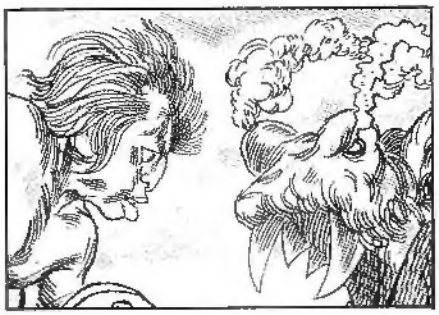
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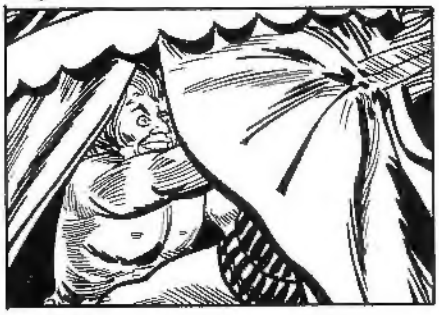
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DEAR COUSIN EERIE

Aaaaaaaagah was right! After eyeing that front cover on issue #21, I felt like screaming. I honestly think it was the worst you have ever had, and I say that with no regrets. If you have one more cover like that one, I'm swearing off EERIE for good. Now on to the rest of the gore. Liked Suttons' MONSTER GALLERY, didn't like the first story; a reprint never excites me. Clear story, "MISCALCULATION", but it could have been stronger. Didn't like the next story, same reason I didn't like the first one. "FATAL DIAGNOSIS" could very well have been a classic, however, it wasn't. I can't make up my mind why. "WARRIOR OF DEATH" although it was the THIRD reprint of the issue, had to be the best story of the lot. Steve Ditko is a giant in the industry. How his stuff stands out, is unbelievable. Now if you had a few more artists like him, who knows how the rest of the junk you come up with would look? Oh no, not another reprint! I can't stand it! In fact, I'm so disgusted, I won't even finish the rest of this letter.

DEBBIE KOCH,
Brooklyn, New York

Okay Deb, if that's the way you really feel then I won't finish this answer. . . .

I looked at the cover of EERIE #21, and right away I visualized a masterpiece of science fiction inside. I come to the story which gives me a hint that it is and what happens? One panel, just ONE panel has anything to do with the front cover. Even the panel has nothing really to do with it, sneakily used by Bill Parente to fill in, an otherwise boring story. What happened Cousin, couldn't he do any better than that? How much insipiration can an artist get from a ridiculous story like that one? No wonder Vic Prezio had a tough time doing his cover. I didn't think it was that bad, but then I've seen much better on EERIE. Come on jelly belly, UNCLE CREEPY is passing you up. Why don't you let the artists do their work from more interesting stories?

FRED SHOREY
Galveston, Va.

As a matter of chatter clatter . . . the cover on that chronicle was done BEFORE the story! Our sour-faced editor, CHILLING BILL PARENTE wrote that jolting journey to fit VIC'S bit, just as he does with all of FRAZZLING FRANK FRAZETTA'S fear facades!

ISSUE #21 had to be your worst so far. The cover stunk! That creature on the cover looked like a cross between a pumpkin and a pineapple. Deeply discouraged, I opened up the cover, to see if there was any spirit left in the mag. "Ooops", a reprint. I said to myself, "beter turn to the next story." Ah ha, a new piece of gore or should I say junk? Oh well, on to the next story. Sheesh, not another reprint! Better skip it. Thank goodness, saved by Ernie Colon and a good story. Well, on we go. Aarrgh, another reprint? Come on EERIE baby, where's the action?

SETH DARVICK
Roslyn, New York

Looks like for you baby, it's outta sight, SETH . . . just OUTTA SIGHT!

The cover of issue #21 was beautiful. Vic Prezio did a great job. I didn't care much for "POINT OF VIEW" and "MISCALCULATION" was really terrible. Tony Williamsune could have done much better than that. "TERROR IN THE TOMB" was a reprint. Of all the stories "FATAL DIAGNOSIS" was the best. I loved the ending! Ernie Colon has sure improved. "WARRIOR OF DEATH" and "HOUSE OF FIENDS" were both reprints. You can do better than four reprints, can't you? By the way, MONSTER GALLERY really stunk. Tom Sutton's art was terrible. Ooops, gotta go, it's almost dawn.

JOE HAMMELL
Trenton, New Jersey

All that clamor about dawning got you yawning has it? Me thinks I smell a BAT here, aye Hammell Don't crow though, Joe . . . try next issue for some mind hammering horror to satisfy your . . . thirst!

I use to think Vic Prezio was a half way good artist, but after that mess he stuck on issue #21, well, forget about it! Was that supposed to be a cover? Now Tom Suttons' art on the MONSTER GALLERY was the kind of art I'm use to seeing in EERIE and CREEPY. Did Tom write the story too? The art was better. I won't go into the reprints this issue, I'll say the best story was obviously "MISCALCULATION". A fine bit of science fiction and the message was kind of frightening. I wonder how long it will be before something like that, actually happens? Tony Williamsune could have done the story more justice if the effect of his art, hadn't been so wishy washy. Too grey and faded looking. "FATAL DIAGNOSIS" I'm afraid to comment about, it was pretty bad. Beside the very obvious mistake of the doc casting a reflection in the mirror, Ernie Colon seemed to be struggling through it. The best thing about the whole story, was your introduction Cousin EERIE; very clever. In one word, the entire issue was poor. Don't have another like it.

VINCENT ZENNA
Barrett, New Hampshire

Okay Zenna, whenna ya gonna give a guy a break? Even an expert can make a MISCALCULATION sometimes! Would you believe that reflection was put in the mirror, purposely . . . to test your gore score for checking our lore? Oh . . . you wouldn't?

Most of your issues are usually enjoyable so my complaint is not about your stories or artwork. My complaint is about your FAN FARE page. Most of the fans and readers like myself, are anxious to have their material printed in EERIE'S FAN FARE, when each issue rolls around. Unfortunately, I realize that only so much can fit on one page. That's the big change I think you should make. Why not expand your FAN FARE page to TWO pages? Think what it would mean to the readers who have been sending in art and stories right along, and haven't seen any of it printed yet. Not being selfish, I'd like to see some of the good art that I sent in, spread across the pages of your fan page. I know a lot of other readers feel the same way about this; won't you consider making at least one of them (me) happy? Next issue, maybe we'll find a surprise? I hope so.

CHARLES ASSALONE
Akron, Ohio

It would be a pleasure spree for me, Charly . . . the more gore I get . . . the more I inset! Speaking of surprises, next issue WILL have some new swill so wait until I spill the stuff, good enough?

What's the matter with you guys? You keep putting in reprints. The stories are good but not good enough to read twice. Bill Parente's "FATAL DIAGNOSIS" was cool, but he made a few blunders. All of the three characters were vampires, right? Then how come the young, doctor vampire cast a reflection in the mirror when he accused the old doctor of being a vamp? We all know that vampires cast no shadows, but in this story, all the people cast shadows. Cut down on these errors will you? The cover on this issue was a mistake too. Get better artists, with better ideas. In spite of it all, I still love your mag.

STANLEY ZEBROWSKI
Chicago, Ill.

And in spite of all our fumbling, bumbling . . . we still love YOU, Stanley!

About the issue; the time has come for someone to comment on the constant change of quality, each issue has from month to month.
One month your cover is GREAT! Then comes a bomb. The next time all the artwork is really fab! After that, ech. What goes on anyway? If you think I'm one of the people who are always complaining, "why don't you get Frazetta back?", you're right. I am! When is he coming back, for good? Tom Sutton seems to be in the same boat with Ernie Colon, Tony Williamsune, and everyone else on the staff of EERIE. One day they're great and absolutely unbeatable; I find it hard to believe that some of the stuff with their names on it can possibly be the same people, the next time I see them. Everyone's human I guess, but I like my entertainment professional, and all the time perfect. Editor Bill Parente seems sincere enough, but you can't match mistakes, so-so artwork, jumbled cover blurbs, poor cover art, and hundreds of other details, with a few excellent stories that never seem to get a fair shake. What about it Cuz, do we get what we're paying for in the future, or do we rebel and go on strike? After all, is it asking too much when I ask for the best? And I know that EERIE can be the best.

CRAIG DUNDEE
Avoca, Wisconsin

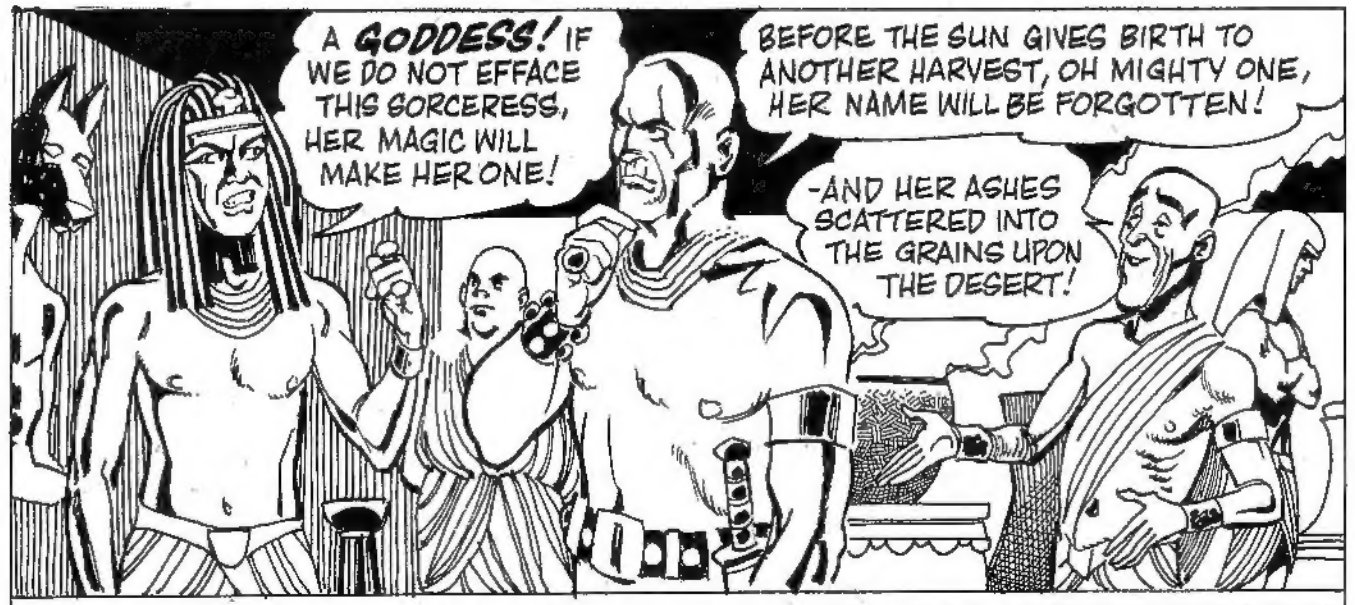
What do you mean CAN be the best?

Want to write us?
Address your poison pen letters to:
EERIE LETTERS,
22 E. 42nd St., N.Y.C. 10017

ART BY ERNIE COLON/STORY BY BILL PARENTE

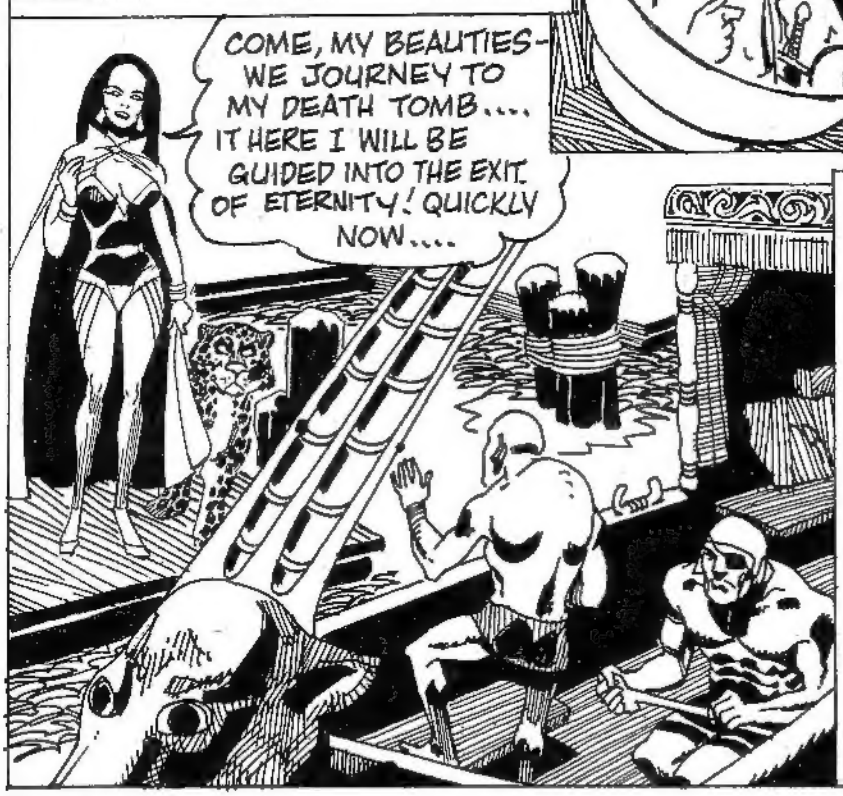
NO MORTAL COULD SUSPECT PHARAOH'S PIETY...NOT EVEN IN TRUTH! THERE WAS THE WORD OF PHARAOH-AND THERE WERE LIES! FOR NO MAN COULD DENY HIS GUILT UNDER TORTURE, NOR ESCAPE IN CONFESSING IT....
WHEN HIS TONGUE NO LONGER ANSWERS HIS DELUSIONS, CUT IT FROM ITS LIES AND BRING IT TO ME...IN A VESSEL!
HE WILL CONFESS, MIGHTY PHARAOH!
GREAT KING-I HAVE NOT BETRAYED YOU- IT IS THE SORCERESS WHO DECEIVES YOU WITH HER MAGIC!
...FOR HE WOULD ONLY BE CAPTURED IN DEATH...INSTANT UPON THE AGONIZED MURMUR OF HIS INNOCENT GUILT...
NEFERA HAS MADDENED PHARAOH'S MIND-MAKE HER CONFESS-HER!
YOU CANNOT HIDE YOUR OWN CRIMES, TRAITOR!
BUT THE SHRIEKING DENIALS OF THE PRISONER WENT BEYOND THE BURIED DUNGEONS OF THE PHARAOH....
CONFESS!
AAAGH!
...SENSED BY TREMBLING ANIMALS WHOSE INSTINCTS WARNED THEM OF A SPIRITUAL PRESENCE. THEIR MISTRESS INHALED THE SCENTED NECTAR WHICH SPILLED INTO THE CHAMBER...HYPNOTIC IN THE PERFUME OF HER SPELL.
AAAAGHHH
I TAUGHT YOU WELL, HIGH PRIEST-AND NOW YOU DARE TO SPEAK MY POWER TO PHARAOH!
SO BE IT, FOOLISH PRIEST- IF YOUR SOUL GROWS TIRED OF THE BODY IT COMMANDS-THEN LET IT BE DAMMED FOREVER---IN ETERNITY!! HAHAAAA--

THOUGHTS FLOWED BETWEEN NEFERA'S WHISPERS, KNOWING NOW THAT PHARAOH HAD BEEN FACED WITH HER POWERS... HE WOULD MURDER HER TO PROTECT HIS OWN!
SO, MY PETS-THE TIME DRAWS NEAR FOR ME TO ENTER THE DESTINY OF MY DEATH-WILL YOU MISS ME? HAHAAA...
-BUT WHY SHOULD YOU? THEN YOU WILL NO LONGER SERVE ME...OR NEED TO. PATIENCE, MY BEAUTIES...SOON I WILL ESCAPE...
...INTO ANOTHER EXISTENCE!
I SEE YOU'VE FOUND THE GODDESS...ISN'T SHE BEAUTIFUL?
THE GODDESS...OH, YES! SHE'S FASCINATING! IS IT THE CAT PRINCESS BAST?
CURIOS
S. ESTRUMSA
YES-QUITE AN UNUSUAL STATUE-ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BUYING HER?
IT WAS ALMOST AS THOUGH SOME MYSTERIOUS INFLUENCE HAD COMPELLED HER TO TAKE IT! SOME HAUNTING PRESENCE-PERHAPS EVEN-


A GODDESS! IF WE DO NOT EFFACE THIS SORCERESS, HER MAGIC WILL MAKE HER ONE!
BEFORE THE SUN GIVES BIRTH TO ANOTHER HARVEST, OH MIGHTY ONE, HER NAME WILL BE FORGOTTEN!
-AND HER ASHES SCATTERED INTO THE GRAINS UPON THE DESERT!

HER DEATH MUST BE A SILENT ONE. NO WORD OF HER POWER MUST EVER LEAVE HER TOMB... REMEMBER ....

...IF YOU BLUNDER, YOUR LIVES WILL REPLACE YOUR FAILURE. MAKE NO MISTAKE IN WHAT YOU DO- PHARAOH ACCEPTS NONE. NOW GO...
THE FOOLS! THEY THINK TO RID THEMSELVES SO EASILY OF ME....

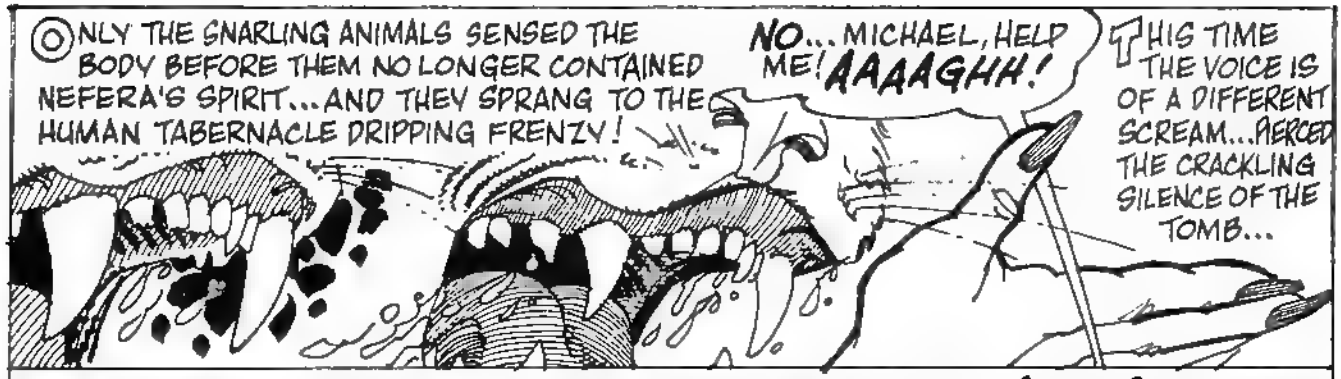

COME, MY BEAUTIES- WE JOURNEY TO MY DEATH TOMB.... IT HERE I WILL BE GUIDED INTO THE EXIT OF ETERNITY! QUICKLY NOW....

...TIME HASTENS TO MARK THE MOMENT OF MY DEATH!

SHE'D HARDLY BEEN DISAPPOINTED WHEN THE INCENSE HAD BEEN FOUND HIDDEN IN THE BASE OF THE IDOL. NOW IT FILLED THE ROOM WITH AN AGELESS PRESENCE OF THE PAST.
IT'S SO- MYSTERIOUS! DOESN'T IT MAKE YOU WONDER IF SHE REALLY EXISTED, MICHAEL?
NOT HALF AS MUCH AS THE SECRETS WHICH ENTOMBED MEN FOR CENTURIES IN THE PERFECTION OF DEATH. THE REST IS... MAKE BELIEVE.
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE OF THAT?
BECAUSE, MY CLEVER LITTLE LADY- SCIENCE CONTROLLED THE PAST AS WELL AS THE PRESENT... NOT MAGIC.
STRANGE... I FEEL AS THOUGH I KNOW HER, BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
-AND I KNOW SOMEONE WHO'D BETTER GET SOME SLEEP... YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED.
YES, I DO FEEL TIRED... SO VERY... VERY TIRED....

SOBBING GUSTS SLIPPED DOWN THE FLICKERING CORRIDORS, PURSUING NEFERA'S FLOWING ROBES - ENDING IN ECHOED SHRIEKS IN THE PASSAGES BEYOND NEFERA'S TOMB....
GLOWING EYES FOLLOWED EACH MOVE THE SORCERESS MADE! WERE THEY SPEAKING VISION TO HUMAN CREATURES
NOW, MY PETS.... BEFORE FATE ARRIVES ENTRAP ME, I WILL PREPARE TO REJOIN MYSELF IN A WORLD MY SPIRIT HAS ALREADY ENTERED!
...OR THINGS MUCH MORE FRIGHTENING THAN DEATH ITSELF!
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN YOURSELF FOR THREE DAYS - AND WE'RE BACK HERE AGAIN! WHY HERE, VERONICA?
MUSEUM OF
MUSEE DE CAIRO
MUSEUM OF CAIRO
I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT, MICHAEL - I HAD TO COME HERE!
- EVER SINCE YOU BOUGHT THAT STATUE, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING SO STRANGE. WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON...
NO - I MEAN IT'S NOTHING MICHAEL, PLEASE STOP WORRYING!
...EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE FINE - JUST FINE!

ONLY MOMENTS SEPARATED THE ASSASINS FROM NEFERA'S DEATH ROOM... HER SCREAMING MAN-BEASTS WOULD NOT DETAIN THEM FROM HER SANCTUARY MUCH LONGER!
GROOOOWR!
SHE COMMANDS EVEN THE BEASTS OF PREY!
DO NOT LET YOURSELVES BE KILLED HERE - YOUR SOUL WILL BE DAMMED!
BY THE TEMPLES OF ISIS! SLAVES ENTOMBED IN THE PRISON OF THESE BEASTS
COME FORWARD - HER TOMB LIES JUST BEYOND US! DESTROY HER!
TORTURED MOANS POSSESED HER SWAYING BODY, AS SHE CHANTED HER CEREMONY INTO THE LINGERING MINUTES, NOT EVEN THE SHOUTS FROM BEHIND HER DOOR DISSOLVED HER MESMERISM.
BAST...QUEEN OF BUBASTIS...I HEAR YOUR COMMAND!
A FINAL BREATH... AND FORMLESS EXISTENCE EXCHANGED ITSELF - NEFERA HAD FASTENED THE LINK OF HER IMMORTALITY!
AVENGE ME, OH BAST - AVENGE ME!
SHRIEEEEK!
LOOK - THE CATS BETRAY HER!
THEY ARE MADDENED!
AHRR
AHR


ONLY THE SNARLING ANIMALS SENSED THE BODY BEFORE THEM NO LONGER CONTAINED NEFERA'S SPIRIT...AND THEY SPRANG TO THE HUMAN TABERNACLE DRIPPING FRENZY!
NO... MICHAEL, HELP ME! AAAAGHH!
THIS TIME THE VOICE IS OF A DIFFERENT SCREAM...PIERCED THE CRACKLING SILENCE OF THE TOMB...

THE LEOPARDS-NO! GYAAAIIIEE!
MY GOD! THIS IS INSANITY! THAT STATUE!

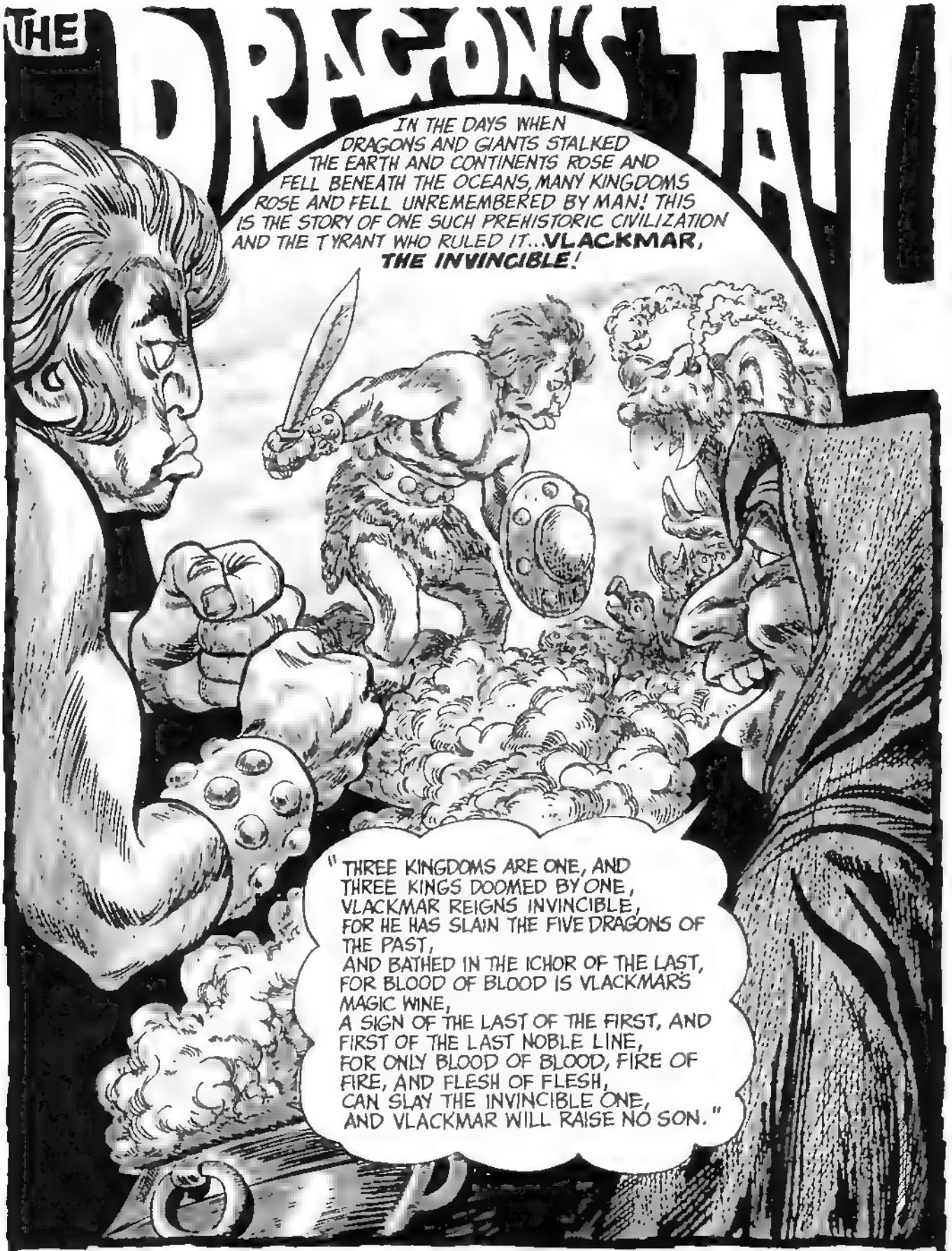
SMASH
IT MUST BE DESTROYED!

-THE BEASTS DID NOT KNOW HER...
IT WAS AS IF SOMEONE ELSE HAD...POSSESED HER!

SEARING SMOKE, STUNG HIS EYES FOR AN INSTANT, BURNING INTO MICHAEL'S SENSES, ONCE HE HAD WIPED THE PAIN FROM HIS VISION.
VERONICA! WHERE ARE YOU, VERONICA?

...THE TERROR OF WHAT LAY BEFORE HIM....
MY GOD... THIS ISN'T VERONICA!

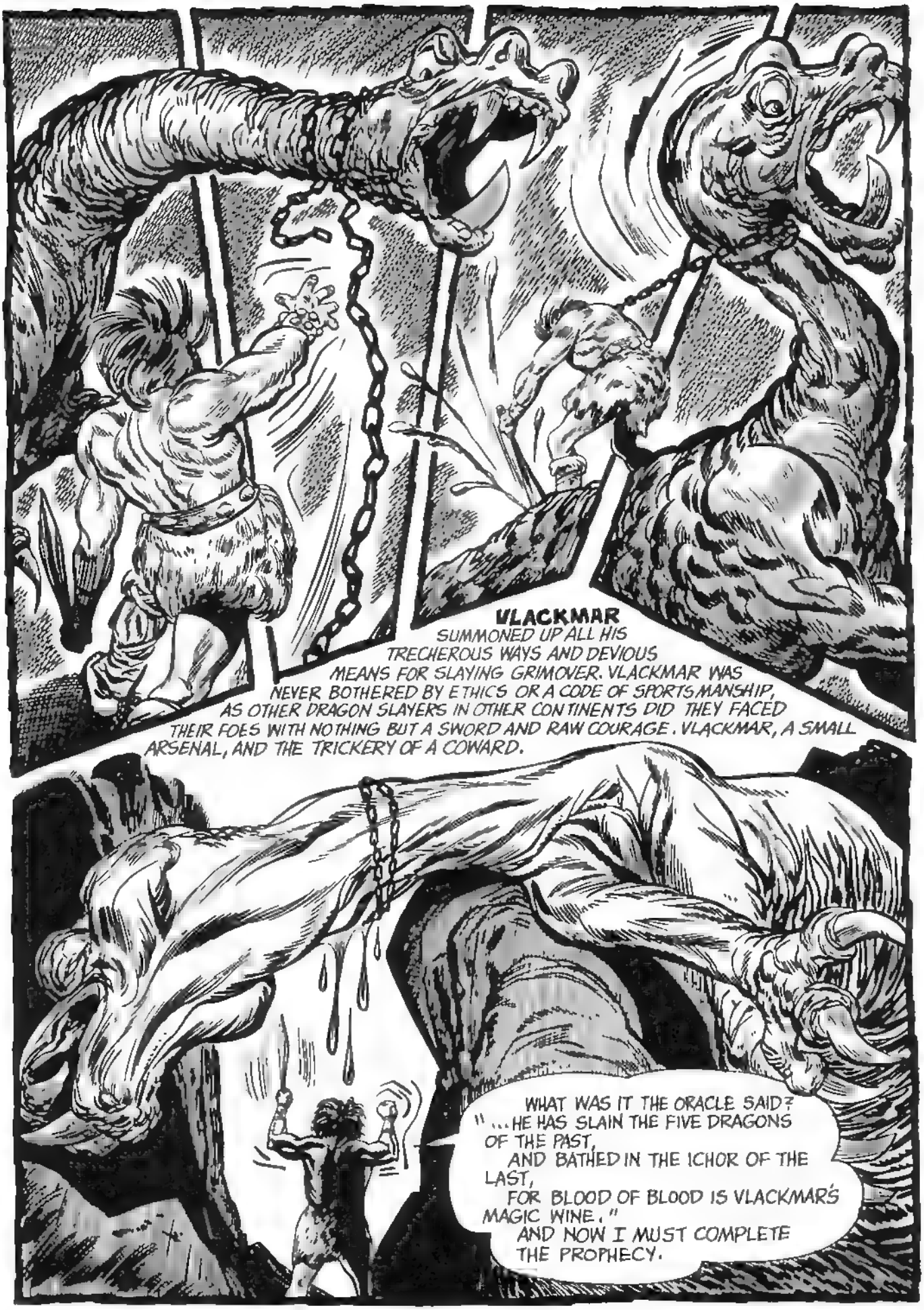
TERROR THAT WOULD BE BURIED FOREVER, IN THE ASHES OF A FLAMING PHYRE!
THAT CORPSE MUST BE-A THOUSAND YEARS OLD!
EEK! WOULD YOU BELIEVE FOUR THOUSAND? LOOKS LIKE THE JILTED GENTLEMAN REALLY GOT E-GYPPED THAT TIME...LETTING A COUPLE OF CATS RIP UP HIS FIRST ROMANCE AND THEN DUSTING OFF HIS SECOND FLAME FOR ANOTHER WOMAN. SORRRY...HEEEE.-



THE ORACLES WORDS PROVED TRUE, FOR VLACKMAR BECAME A SLAYER OF DRAGONS. IN THE KINGDOM OF MOORDOOM, HE SLEW DOOMDRIVER AND MOORDREAD. IN THE KINGDOM OF BLOODYAX, HE SLEW AZSMASHER AND BLOODYBOOMER. THEN, HE CAME TO THE KINGDOM OF GRIMOON....

ART BY TONY WILLIAMSUNE/STORY BY KIM BALL

IN GRIMOON, THERE ROAMED A BEHEMOTH KNOWN AS THE FIRST DRAGON OF THE LAND... A DRAGON CALLED GRIMORER.
HA! GRIMORER! IT IS YOUR BLOOD, YOUR ICHOR, THAT WILL GIVE ME INVULNERABILITY! I CHALLENGE YOU TO GIVE BETTER ACCOUNT THAN YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS!
BAH! YOUR SIBLINGS GAVE A STERNER APPEARANCE THAN YOU. FIRST DRAGON OF THE LAND, INDEED! PREPARE TO SPILL BLOOD, LIZARD!
ARRAGH!


VLACKMAR SUMMONED UP ALL HIS TRECHEROUS WAYS AND DEVIOUS MEANS FOR SLAYING GRIMOVER. VLACKMAR WAS NEVER BOTHERED BY ETHICS OR A CODE OF SPORTSMANSHIP, AS OTHER DRAGON SLAYERS IN OTHER CONTINENTS DID THEY FACED THEIR FOES WITH NOTHING BUT A SWORD AND RAW COURAGE. VLACKMAR, A SMALL ARSENAL, AND THE TRICKERY OF A COWARD.
WHAT WAS IT THE ORACLE SAID? "...HE HAS SLAIN THE FIVE DRAGONS OF THE PAST, AND BATHED IN THE ICHOR OF THE LAST, FOR BLOOD OF BLOOD IS VLACKMAR'S MAGIC WINE." AND NOW I MUST COMPLETE THE PROPHECY.

VLACKMAR, NOW INVULNERABLE FROM THE MAGIC BATH, WAS THE MIGHTIEST OF WARRIORS! AND WITH HIS MIGHT, GREW HIS GREED, UNTIL HE FELT HE WAS BORN TO RULE THE ENTIRE CONTINENT. A PLAN WORKED OUT IN HIS EVIL MIND, HE JOURNEYED TO THE KINGDOM OF MOORDOOM, SMALLEST OF THE 3 KINGDOMS.
WELCOME, VLACKMAR, SLAYER OF DOOM-DRIVER AND MOORDREAD, WHOM WE FEARED WOULD SOMEDAY DESTROY US ALL. YOU MAY REMAIN IN OUR COURT AS LONG AS YOU WISH.
MANY THANKS, YOUR HIGHNESS, BUT I WILL STAY ONLY UNTIL MY CORONATION! I'M SURE YOUR SUBJECTS WILL NOT OBJECT TO MY FILLING THE POSITION YOU NOW VACATE!
SWOK
THE OFFICIALS OF THE KINGDOM, HELPLESS TO RESIST, AND FEARING THEIR LIVES, IMMEDIATELY CORONATED VLACKMAR!
MY FIRST ACT IS TO DECLARE WAR ON THE BLOODYAX NATION!
BUT, SIRE, WE ARE AT PEACE WITH BLOODYAX! THERE HAS BEEN NO INCIDENT ON WHICH TO WAGE WAR! BESIDES THE COUNTRY IS ALMOST TWICE AS LARGE AS OURS IN NUMBER OF WARRIORS!
SILENCE! OLD FOOL! REMEMBER VLACKMAR THE INVINCIBLE LEADS YOU NOW! GUARDS TAKE THIS MAN TO THE DUNGEON!

VLACKMAR FOSTERED HIS WAR MERELY FOR HIS OWN AMUSEMENT! HE COULD AT ANY TIME CONQUER BLOODYAX AS HE CONQUERED MORDOOM! FINALLY, TIRING OF THE WAR, HE TRAVELED TO THE ENEMY CAMP AT NIGHT, FOUND THE TENT OF THE KING, AND BEFORE THE GUARD COULD EVEN SUMMON HELP...
...VANQUISHED HIM!
HA HA,HA! TOMORROW, AFTER A SHORT CORONATION, MY FRIENDS, WE MARCH AGAINST GRIMOON!
AND MARCH THEY DID THOUGH THEY FOUND NO RESISTANCE, FOR GRIMOON HAD ALWAYS BEEN AT PEACE, AND HAD NO ARMIES, BUT...
VLACKMAR ORDERED THE VILLAGES BURNED BEHIND THEM, TO DELAY ANY ENEMY TROOPS UNTIL THEY CAME TO...
..THE CASTLE GRIM WITH ITS DRAWBRIDGE DOWN AND NO DEFENSES....

RUNNING THROUGH THE EBONY CASTLE TO THE THRONE ROOM, VLACKMAR HEARD ONLY THE TREAD OF HIS FOOTSTEPS.
AH! HAD I KNOWN THAT THE RUMOR ABOUT THE RULER OF THIS COUNTRY BEING A GIANT WAS TRUE, I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED MORE RESISTANCE FROM YOU!
PLEASE THIS HOUSE IS IN MOURNING. LESS THAN A MONTH AGO MY WIFE WAS SLAIN! PLEASE COME WITH YOUR BUSINESS AFTER THE TIME OF MOURNING!
I WILL SPEAK WITH YOU NOW! THE MINSTRELS SING OF YOUR LAND AS ONE WHICH LIVES IN HARMONY WITH ITS ANIMALS. DO YOUR PEOPLE HAVE NO MORE SENSE THAN TO LIVE WITH THEIR BEASTS? I THOUGHT YOU'D AT LEAST THANK ME FOR SLAYING GRIMOVER.
YOU.... SLAYED... GRIMOVER?
GO TO THE VILLAGES OF ALL THE THREE KINGDOMS! TELL THEM VLACKMAR HAS DEFEATED THE KING OF GRIMOON IN MORTAL COMBAT, AND THAT I TAKE HIS PLACE TO BRING OUR FREEDOM TO THE OTHER LANDS OF EARTH!

NONE OF THE CASTLES OF THE 3 KINGDOMS CAN SUIT MY GLORIOUS REIGN! I WILL MAKE MY OWN TO CELEBRATE MYSELF AND SING OF MY CONQUESTS! FOLLOW ME!
WITH A BIZARRE TASTE FOR CRUELTY AND IRONY IN HIS TWISTED MIND, VLACKMAR LEADS HIS MEN TO THE SCENE OF HIS SLAYING OF THE DRAGON GRIMOVER!
THIS CAVE WILL BE MY CASTLE! THE MOUNTAIN WILL BE HEWN INTO A STATELY EXTERIOR! THE DOOR WILL BE OF THE DRAGONS SKULL! IT'S RIBS WILL BE A GREAT ARCH FOR THE THRONE ROOM!
HA, HA! BUT WHAT SHALL I DO WITH THE TAIL? IT IS AS USELESS TO MY PLANS AS IT WAS TO ITS ORIGINAL OWNER! HA!
HOLD, VLACKMAR! I, BAROOM, SEEK VENGENCE! MY FATHER WAS KING OF THIS LAND, AND...

SOLDIERS! I BEG OF YOU TO LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS! THIS IS A PEACEFUL LAND, THE ONLY ONE WHO SEEKS DEATH HERE IS VLACKMAR!
AS THE TROOPS LISTEN TO THE GIANT, THE DRAGON'S SKELETON TAIL RISES AND...
FALLS ON VLACKMAR
KRAK
AND VLACKMAR WILL RAISE NO SON.
KNOWING THERE IS ONLY ONE DEFENSE FOR VLACKMAR'S SWORD, HE REMOVES HIS HELMET. IN THAT INSTANT, VLACKMAR REALIZES THE PROPHESIES MEANING... LAST OF THE FIRST DRAGONS IN THE LAND, FIRST-BORN OF THE LAST, BLOOD OF BLOOD...
FIRE OF FIRE...
MOTHER!
END

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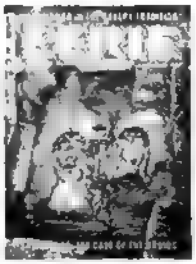
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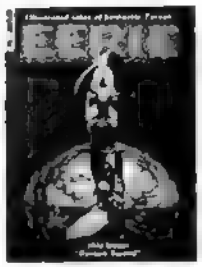
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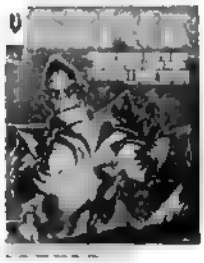
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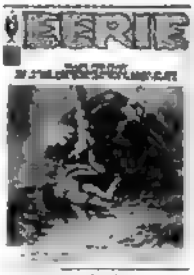
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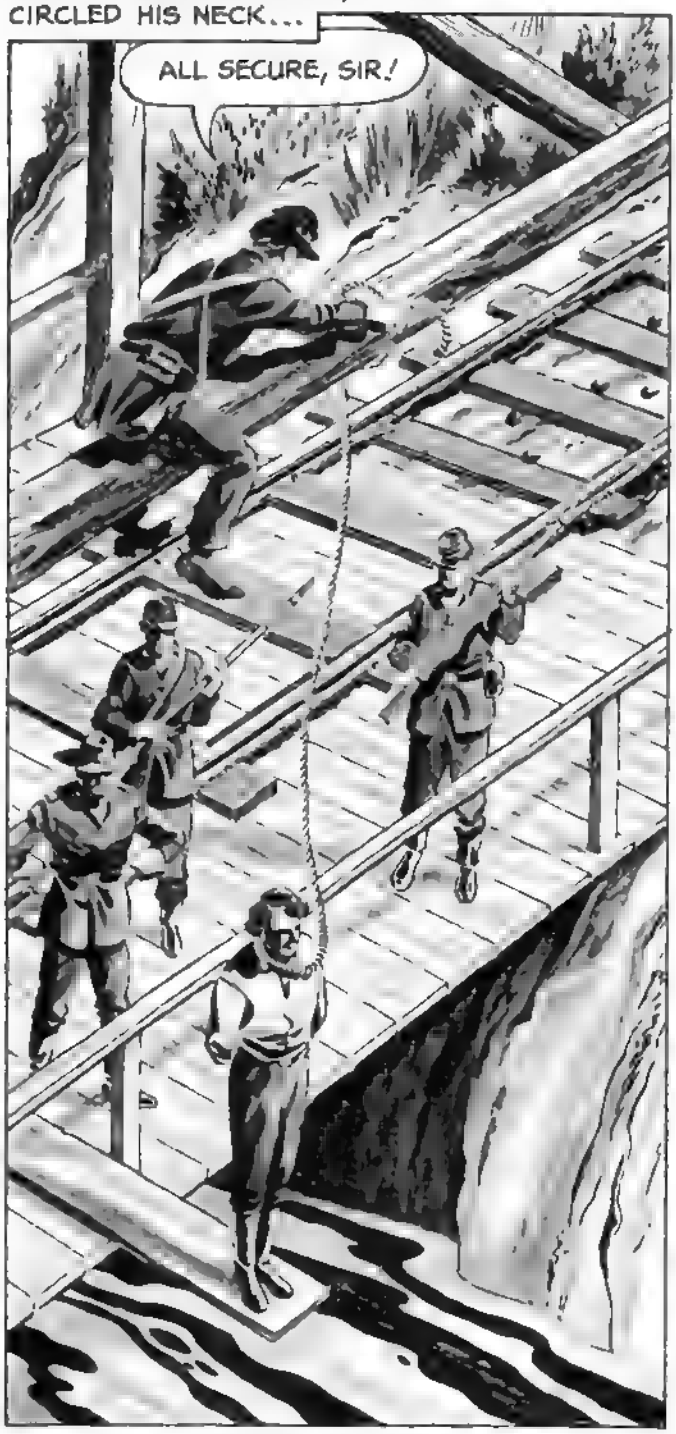
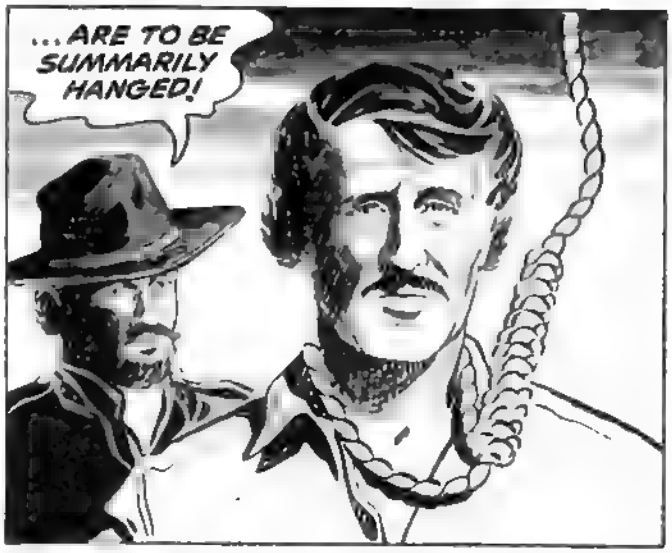
TIME FOR A BIT OF CULTURE, VULTURES, AS WE ILLUMINATE A WEIRD WORK BY AN ACKNOWLEDGED MASTER OF MACABRE, ***AMBROSE BIERCE***, CONCERNING...

AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE!

A MAN STOOD UPON A RAILROAD BRIDGE IN NORTHERN ALABAMA, LOOKING DOWN INTO THE SWIFT WATER 20 FEET BELOW HIS HANDS WERE BOUND BEHIND HIS BACK, A ROPE LOOSELY ENCIRCLED HIS NECK...

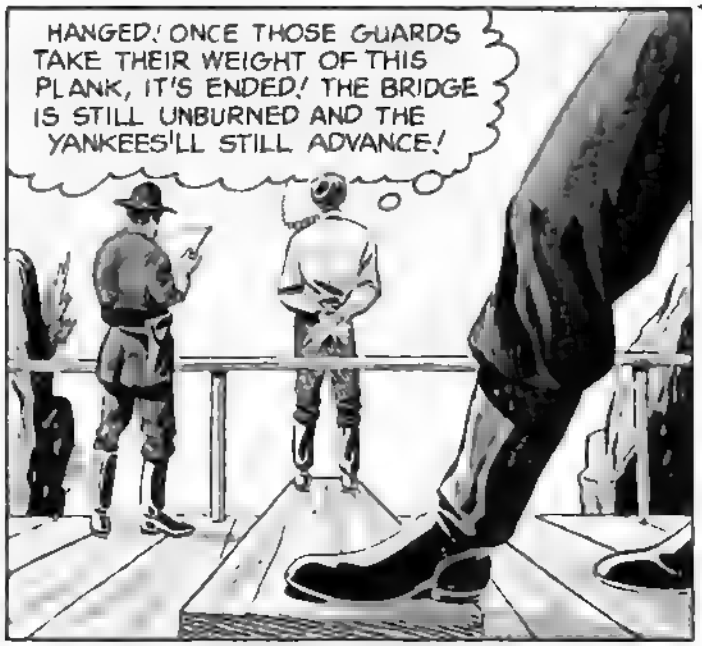


THE MAN ENGAGED IN BEING HANGED WAS A CIVILIAN. HIS FEATURES WERE GOOD, AND HE HAD A KINDLY EXPRESSION WHICH ONE WOULD HARDLY EXPECT IN ONE WHOSE NECK WAS IN THE HEMP...

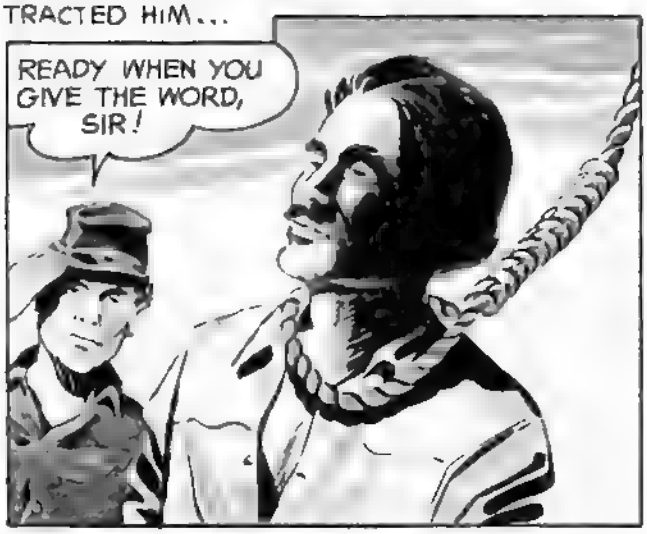


EVIDENTLY THIS WAS NO VULGAR ASSASSIN...BUT THE LIBERAL MILITARY CODE MAKES PROVISION FOR HANGING MANY KINDS OF PERSONS, AND GENTLEMEN ARE NOT EXCLUDED...

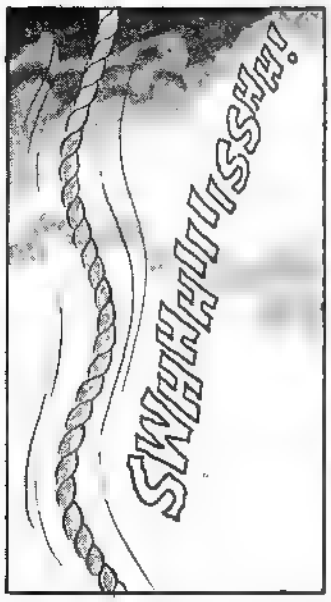
 ART BY BOB JENNEY/SCRIPT BY ARCHIE GOODWIN

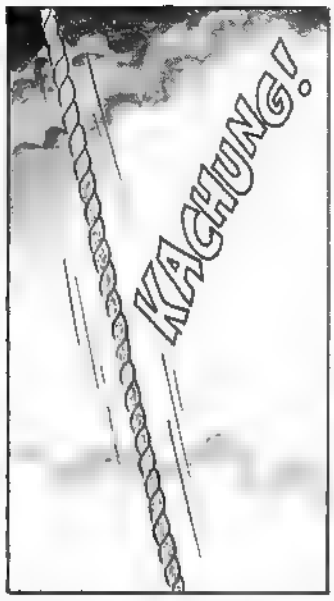


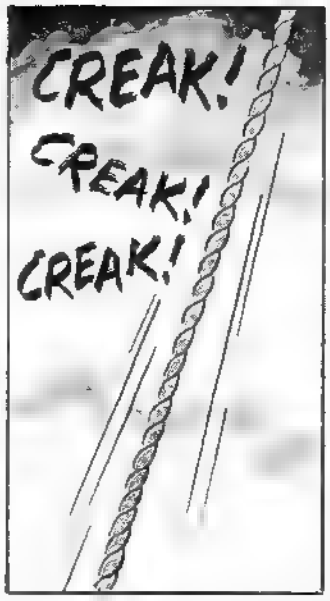
THE CONDEMNED MAN CLOSED HIS EYES TO FIX HIS LAST THOUGHTS ON HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN... THE SUN'S WARMTH, THE SOUND OF THE WATER BELOW... ALL HAD DISTRACTED HIM...



THOUGHTS WERE PAINFUL AND HE REOPENED HIS EYES... A PIECE OF DANCING DRIFTWOOD IN THE SWIRLING WATERS BELOW CAUGHT HIS ATTENTION ... HIS EYES FOLLOWED IT ALONG THE CURRENT...







KEEN, POIGNANT AGONIES LEAPED THROUGH EVERY FIBER OF PEYTON FARQUHAR, SHOOTING FROM HIS NECK DOWNWARD LIKE STREAMS OF PULSATING FIRE AS HE FELT HIMSELF FALLING, FALLING...

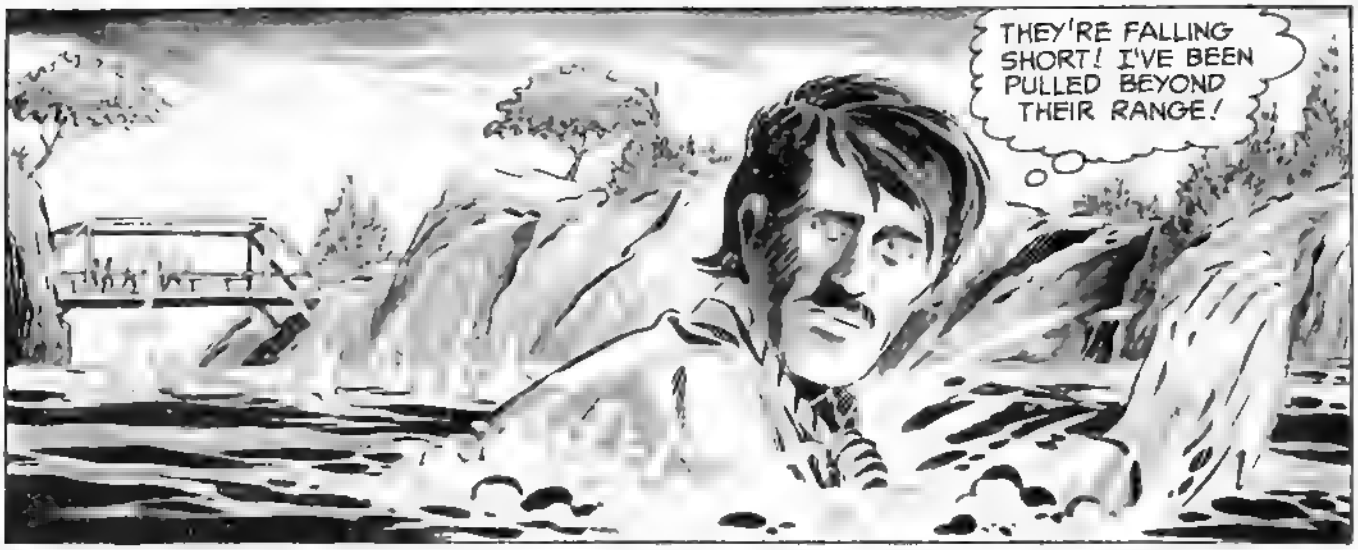
A FRIGHTFUL ROARING FILLED HIS EARS, AND ALL WAS COLD AND DARK... HE OPENED HIS EYES TO A DISTANT GLEAM OF LIGHT ABOVE WHICH WAS GROWING DIMMER AS HE SANK FURTHER AND FURTHER...

BUT THE SUFFOCATING NOOSE ABOUT HIS NECK KEPT THE WATER FROM HIS LUNGS... UNCONSCIOUS OF AN EFFORT, A SHARP PAIN IN HIS WRIST APPRISED HIM HE WAS TRYING TO FREE HIS HANDS...

HIS CLAWING FINGERS, FINALLY LOOSE, TUGGED AT THE STRANGLING HEMP AS PEYTON FARQUHAR, NECK ACHING AND BRAIN ON FIRE, BURST INTO BLINDING SUNLIGHT AND ...*AIR!*

FARQUHAR DIVED, AS DEEPLY AS HE COULD. THE WATER ROARED IN HIS EARS LIKE THE VOICE OF NIAGARA, YET HE HEARD THE DULLED THUNDER OF THE VOLLEY, AND WAS AWARE OF SHINING BITS OF METAL SPRAYING THROUGH THE WATER AROUND HIM...

SUDDENLY HE FELT HIMSELF WHIRLED ROUND AND ROUND--WATER, BANKS, FOREST, THE NOW DISTANT BRIDGE AND SOLDIERS, COMINGLED AND BLURRED.. HE WAS CAUGHT UP IN A VORTEX AND WHIRLED TO THE SURFACE... WHERE MUSKETS STILL CRACKED IN THE DISTANCE...



GRAVEL AND SAND SIFTED BENEATH HIS FEET, AND PEYTON FARQUHAR WEPT WITH DELIGHT... HE DUG HIS FINGERS INTO THE MUD AND STONE OF THE BANK, PULLING HIMSELF OUT, BLESSING IT...

THE WHIZ AND RATTLE OF GRAPESHOT OVERHEAD ROUSED HIM... THE RANDOM FAREWELL OF A FRUSTRATED CANNONEER, INEFFECTIVE AND FUTILE... ***PEYTON FARQUHAR WAS FREE!***

HE TRUDGED THROUGH THE SEEMINGLY INTERMINABLE WOODS, VASTER AND WILDER THAN HE REMEMBERED IT... HIS NECK IN PAIN AND HORRIBLY SWOLLEN, EYES CONGESTED AND TONGUE THICK WITH THIRST...

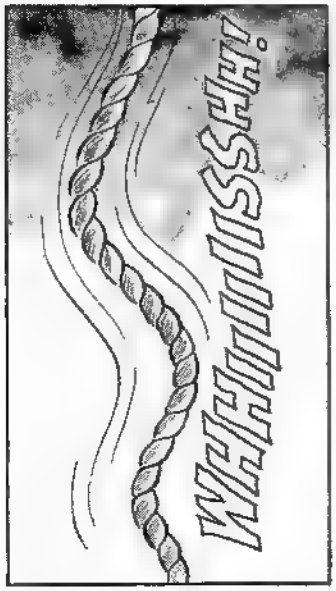
FATIGUED, FOOTSORE, FAMISHING, HE AT LAST FOUND A ROAD .. UNTRAVELED AND DESERTED, BUT LEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION...

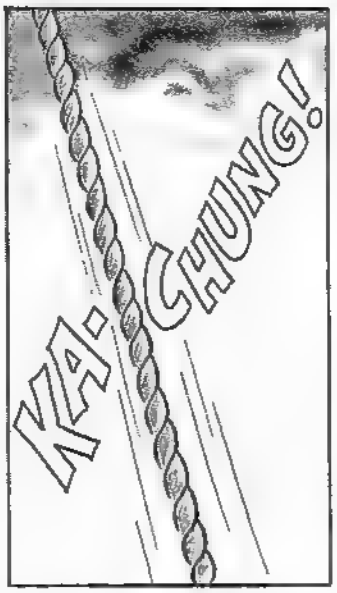
ALL WAS AS HE LEFT IT, EVEN MORE BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL TO HIM NOW. HE GLIMPSED A FLUTTER OF FEMALE GARMENTS... HIS WIFE, LOOKING FRESH AND COOL, WAITED ON THE VERANDA STEPS...

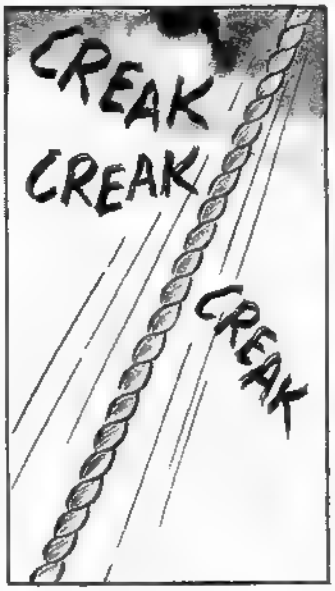
SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL.. STANDING SILENT AND STILL, AN ATTITUDE OF MATCHLESS GRACE AND DIGNITY, SMILING JOYFULLY, INVITINGLY...

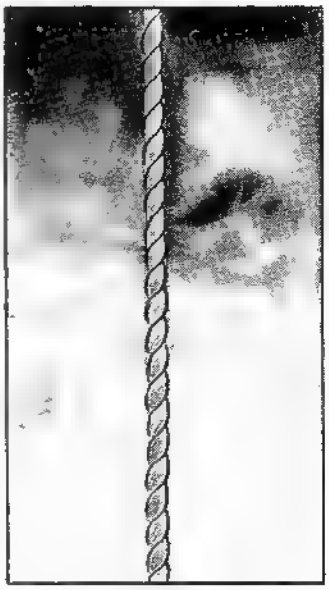
FARQUHAR REACHED OUT...ABOUT TO CLASP HER TO HIM...

HE FELT A STUNNING BLOW UPON THE BACK OF HIS NECK! A BLINDING WHITE LIGHT BLAZED ALL ABOUT HIM WITH A SOUND LIKE THE SHOCK OF A CANNON!

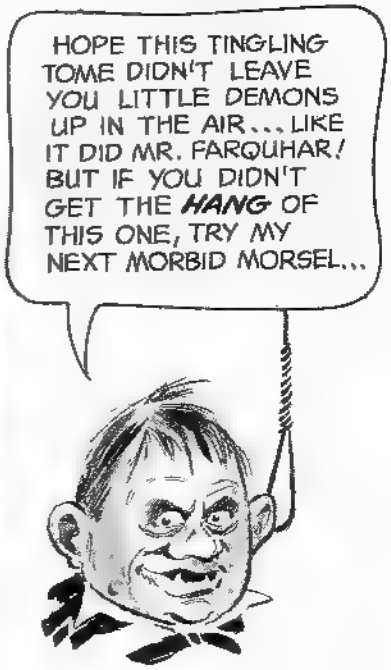








...THEN ALL WAS DARKNESS AND SILENCE! PEYTON FARQUHAR WAS DEAD; HIS BODY, WITH A BROKEN NECK, DANGLING GENTLY BENEATH THE TIMBERS OF THE OWL CREEK BRIDGE...



Get set to sweat, FRET CADETS . . . as I blister your blinkers with this bubbling, bit of devilish brimstone! Step down, if you dare into the sulfuric sanctuary of SATAN'S, sizzling sepulcher, but watch out your volatile visit isn't too hot to handle. Keep a couple of ice cubes handy, just in case! Now, if you're all ready to ignite your fright, we go to . . .

"HADES"

Smells of blistered, soul beings filled the gaseous chambers with incinerated suffering. Flesh-charred creatures walked along the white-hot corridors without reason, stumbling into the endless passageways which stretched beyond their sobbing. Was their journey's end around the next, dark corner? Nothing but hissing murmurs met them; sentenced mortals struggling in the prison of their fate. Here, where death is vaporized to permeate the stifled vestibules, eternity still thirsts to find a meaning. Here, each second ticks a worthless cadence upon the fallen souls of scalded mortals! We now are in . . . HADES!

Around us vapors thicken into black dust at our feet, unseen cries of hopeless begging screaming from each crevice. Within the steaming mist, there suddenly arises then a voice which shrieks attonement! Your nerves snap taunt beneath the piercing wail of danger, and then through floating spumes of acrid vapors, you look into the vision of destruction! Stoked eyes, glow in hollow rapture at the sounds of tribute rent him, and a sweeping gesture finally flings his bleak commandents at us; words which seek dominion over all who serve in agony. SATAN steps upon the stairway to his throne, for here he is the molten majesty who rules his world, alone. He is LUCIFER and BEELZEBUB, filling fast his dynasty with mortal kindling . . . forsaken fuel to feed the fires of his temples Punishment sweeps us quickly past the memory of our death, leading lost and tattered beings, into the fury of this damned Inferno.

A guy's really got to have gall to crawl out of the pall looking like a ball of maul! BASHING BRUCE JONES, stones our senses with this dizzifying droodle, numbs our noodle through and through-dle, and simply turns our stomachs to stroodle! Okay Bruce . . . TRUCE! Get this guy back to Kansas . . . FAST!

Now, as the shreds of silence slowly fade like whispy threads of hope, each ravaged prisoner gropes to find his freedom; alas escape was left behind upon his graveyard epilogues. "Don't take me" move the wordless mouths; here no one speaks without permission. "Another chance", implore the outstretched limbs you see, struggling to engrasp the ledge's end, before the plummet into Satan's crematory. Even now, at the very moment of its ending, hope flickers in the soundless chants that echo through the catacombs. Poor, hideous things they are, thinking that mere agony would be good reason to release them! Hal I say. The figments of pure pain cannot replace the rubble of your gifted souls; did they not spark the first flame which at last, returns them all to cinders. Small heaps of ashes, sifted in the slightest wind as even your very mortality was, and scattered into nothing. Nothing, but the crackling sting of demon whips, and scorched delusions that you might escape. Abandon them, mourning mortals . . . you've come at last to HADES!

TERRIFYING TIMOTHY BOERTLEIN, straight from the rattle country of Troy, N.Y., tells us to pay attention to this profound, piece of postage, addressed,

To whom it may concern; All the days of my life, I shall always remember that hot, July morning. July 27, 1995, and it would be quite impossible for me to state that it was no more or no less normal than any other. By then, every day was horribly abnormal. The fear of total war was a constant threat, our enemies were proving to the world how powerful they were by invading whatever neutral countries remained. I had returned from an important meeting with the Congress and we'd agreed without doubt, to send our armies into each country that had been attacked. We had to prevent complete annihilation! Just as I stepped into my office, the red alert, phone rang; huge waves of aircraft had been monitored nearing our coasts Even before the command of retaliation had begun to be carried out against them, the attackers made it known that this was no human assault. Reports began flooding my office; New York City in ruins, California laid waste, Moscow, China . . . the entire world was under attack! Then, with almost the entire planet eliminated, the mysterious invaders retreated. As suddenly as it all began, it had ended. Only scattered remains and close to insane people now were left, I had survived the nightmarish horror. When they returned, the sky appeared as a solid sheet of metal, so numerous were their aircraft! One by one they descended, like huge insects, to sting from us, the remainder of life in our bodies. They gathered all the survivors into groups, and set us working to arrange what little sanity remained here. We had lasted, only to become human cattle; I was put into E unit to remove the rubble until this moment. For in that momen I will at last, escape in the elimination chamber. There is no chance for any other. Maybe it's all a nightmare; but if it isn't . . . GOD HELP US!

William P. Charles
PRESIDENT OF
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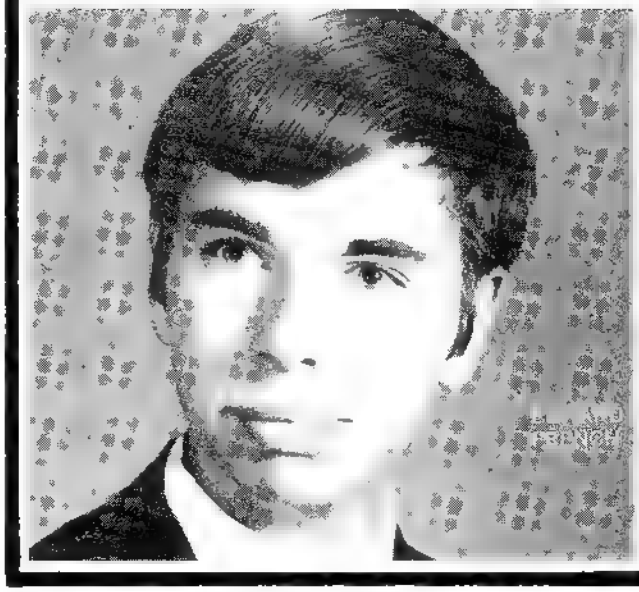
CAULDRON CONTEST WINNER



If you help me drag the old gag bag out of the yell cellar, CORPULENT CUZZINS . . . we'll find out if there's any ripe tripe left in the shriveled, hack pack! Before we meddle into another muddle of murky, monster muck how about we unfester some fermented facts concerning our second, CAULDRON CONTEST winner? This month's sonnet, sensation was slipped into our cringe syringe by FRAZZLING EDWARD FRENCH. It should numb your numbles with a perfect piece of paralyzing prosery, and DREADED ED takes his winning spot in our acrid array of fray play, for a scintillating, fantasy session entitled, "SOUL POOL". Besides the acclaim of the maim mob here in cartoony, loonyland, ... EDWARD'S DREADWARD has won him a thrilling billing in my chilling filling. So, without further ado, we'll fill you in on the chagrin banquet served up by shudder chef, SIZZLING THOMAS SUTTON. All you starving, saga nuts ought to enjoy this prizewinning portion of FRENCH cooking! And, while you're busy chomping on his choice, chunk of gruesome gunk we'll get the throe-down on EDWARD EMERSON FRENCH: our elated, grief chief, and top banana in our FANTASY/HORROR festival.

To begin the plaudits with a bit of irony, would you believe this eighteen year old, author was born the very day editor, BABBLING BILL PARENTE was? It's true, grue crew! Of course PARENTE is hundreds of years older than ED, who by the way, fell from his world into ours during the seventeenth of April, Nineteen Hundred and Fifty One; a truly, ripe year for things of horror to be born! Following his screaming entrance into the chaos of this small but insignificant solar system, E. E. FRENCH soon proved this was no ordinary, bouncing bundle of bunting From the uncharted region known as Pelham, New Hampshire, FEARSOME FRENCH began flowering into a somewhat, fiendishly talented fellow. As vividly as his withered memory can recall, STEADY EDDIE discovered quite readily the Utopia of TV, movies and comic books; he drifted in the suspension of that wonder until he grew restless to create some of that mystery for himself. He found his thoughts pursued by "an unbendable fascination with the unreal ". . . and before long our monster master was tossing FRENCH dressing everywhere. His imagination was unstopable, so deep were his desires to create things. Perhaps he was influenced by that famous doctor of legendary, monster lore who also wished to create "things". Ho boy, did HE create a THING!

In the meantime, back at Alvirne High in Hudson FABRICATING FRENCH was weaving other methods of his madness into bits of pure ambrosia. He found a flair for commercial art good enough to pursue, learning to expand that interest into practice, through some on-the-job experience. When time permitted, he began cartooning for the "Alvirnian"; the high school paper. It was only natural that illustrating and offset printing would also grow as outlets for our budding buddy. The FRENCH man tells me he's mighty proud of an ink sketch he did last year which was chosen to represent New Hampshire in an anthology of high school art published by the National Poetry Press. From all evidence, it appears that being the descendant of a great, American sculptor has bestowed deep promise on our glad lad. Daniel Chester French was the great great grandfather of our writing winner, he created both the famed, Lincoln Memorial statue in Washington, and the equally as famous Minuteman at Lexington. Will young Mr. FRENCH turn out to be a "chisler" after all? He's not telling. One thing's certain, he didn't chisel on the choice of material he used in his "SOUL POOL" story; even our emaciated editor enjoyed doing the script for FROTHING FRENCH'S, crunch classic.

"I can remember sitting out on the lawn furniture, or laying on the beach last summer jotting down the notes for that story. You really surprised me with that letter telling me I'd won!!" So says our shock scholar. But writing is only one of the many things this boy has been dabbling in. Drama is another; performances in "Glass Menagerie", "A Christmas Carol" and "Death of a Salesman" have brought FANTASTIC FRENCH a number of awards, as well as bringing to the Alvirne Players a high regard for his ability. However, our modest champion insists that credit be given to his swinging, teacher Mrs. Louise Pryor. A dedicated and beautiful person I am told Okay Louise, you got the plug, now remember . . . for that little favor I expect you to become a life long fan of my cringe chronicle! I thank you, my editor thanks you, and of course my publisher thanks you! Back to your pupil. With all those interests burning in his brain chambers, one hardly thinks that hobbies could enter the picture. Rubbish! Becoming a being of unbelievable bounty has done nothing to wet this jet gent's parched pursuits. He still needs the relaxation of sports and cavorts to unravel his revelry. Swimming, sunning, funning and just running (from what nobody knows) occupy an important catagory in FUMING FRENCH'S curriculum.

As for the future, and what it hides for chomp-champ FRENCH behind its unknown fabric, Summer Stock seems to be the next adventure our exuberant explorer will experience. Time to try other things has yet to come, for the moment FRENCH has wrenched all the excitement he can out of doing his thing.

A fina , furor or two about his winning, write up; Fantasy/Horror seems an intriguing trip to take, I'm sure all the fan clan agrees. Much of the contestants' contributions which deluged my humble hovel were tales of the fantastic. MR. FRENCH'S ditty was a most unique, shriek piece that not only told a story, but had a thoughtful message to flog into the noggin: "SOUL POOL" besides being the pure fantasy it was also remains fantasy at its purest. The characters he created who have come alive in the pages of my gulp pulp, lived not only in the imagination of his mind, but perhaps might one day exist in the scheme of our future. Gak . . . ! I'd say FLABBERGASTING FRENCH'S fiction, fractured our fibers with a filling, figment of forboding fantasy . . . after you see it, I think you'll say so too.

Fortunately, for ED, he won't get to meet me in person, after all, I wouldn't want to wipe out his mind in one instant. Seeing me is believing it! If, it's any consolation to our WARY WONDER not being able to take the shock of my snoot and greeting me in the . . . flesh . . . hee . . . one of our salivating, staff members is dusting off a spot to pile up your life time subscription when we start getting it together for you. Of course I only asked the zombie crowd to deliver MY liver, lacerating masterpiece each month, UNCLE CARBUNCLE CREEPY will have to do his own dirty work and send you his fizzle. Don't worry though, if I know slim he'll bring it to you himself! Who else would take any of the slop he peddles, unless it was free! Oh well, the knell chimes are ringing in the torture chamber, I'll be leaving you to your grieving ED old DREAD, and one more thing, we won't forget that bundle of original artwork from the positively, unprecedented pencil and pen set of OMINOUS THOMAS SUTTON! Now that's something to shout Ooo la la! about. I'd like to end with a shout of my own ED . . . from the gristle group here in the coop, to you . . . CONGRATULATIONS!!!

END

 ART BY TOM SUTTON/STORY BY EDWARD E. FRENCH

THE CHILDRENS RADIATION WOUNDS HAD ALMOST HEALED NOW... BUT NOT THE PARENT CREATURES, THEY HAD BEEN POISONED... THIS ONE LIKE THE OTHERS, WAS ALIVE ONLY IN MIND, IT'S BODY WAS DEAD!
HELP ME... HELP!

TWO DARK HOLLOWS STARED AT THEM WHERE EYES HAD ONCE BEEN, ONLY TWO, TINY CAVITIES REMAINED TO SUGGEST A NOSE HAD ONCE BREATHED STIFLED AIR.
SOB... SNIFFLE
LEAVE US ALONE... KEEP AWAY!
WHY... YOU'RE CHILDREN!

THE CREATURE TURNED PLEADINGLY TOWARD THE SOUND OF ALEC'S VOICE... AND SHOAT COULD NO LONGER WAIT TO INVOKE HIS WARNING.
YOU NOT HURT JEANNIE!
I WON'T HURT YOU... I NEED YOUR HELP, THAT'S ALL I ASK...

THE CREATURE TURNED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE NEW VOICE REACHING OUT BLINDLY, A SECOND LATER THE SPACE AGE GOLIATH STUMBLED FORWARD AND HIT THE GROUND!
SHOAT!

SHOAT'S STAFF HAD FOUND THE MARK BETWEEN THE SOCKETS OF IT'S SKULL.
IT WAS GONNA HURT JEANNIE...

ALEC KNELT BESIDE THE PITIFUL CORPSE, HIS MIND NEARLY FROZEN IN RECOLECTION. HE REMEMBERED THE PARENT CREATURES BEFORE THEY HAD BECOME MONSTERS.
...I DID GOOD ALEC... SHOAT DID GOOD?

THE MIST CLOUDING HIS MIND BEGAN TO CLEAR... AND HE COULD SEE HIMSELF WALKING WITH HIS OWN PARENT CREATURES, BUT THE TREES HAD LEAVES...

OH FATHER... LET'S GO SEE THE ANIMALS, CAN WE...?

AND YOU CAN FEED THE ELEPHANTS... HOW WOULD YOU LIKE THAT?

... AND THE BUILDINGS WERE TALL, AND NONE OF THE WINDOWS WERE BROKEN, AND EVERYONE WAS GENTLE, AND CLEAN, AND THE SUN WAS WARM... GENTLE...

OH CAN I... COME ON MOTHER... YOU TOO!

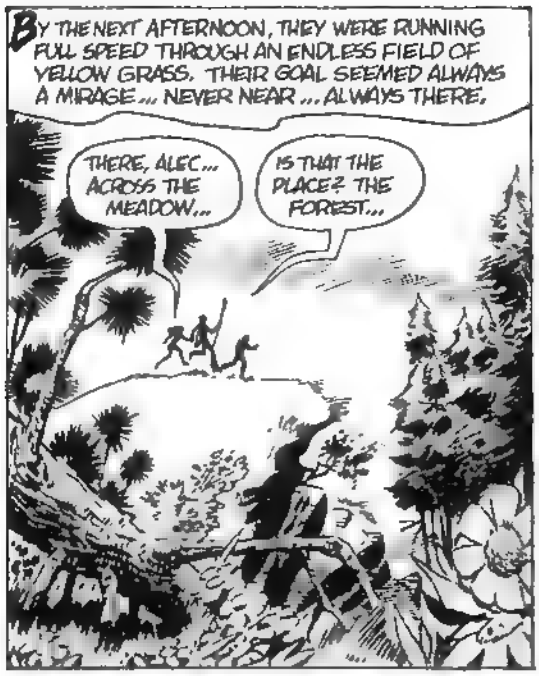
SUDDENLY ALEC SAW THE MAN IN THE PULPIT AND REMEMBERED... IT WAS SUNDAY! ALEC THOUGHT HE COULD HEAR THE ORGAN MUSIC, GENTLY FILLING THE AIR...

THEN THE CLOUDS PARTED .. ALEC LIFTED HIS EYES TO THE GREY SKY OF HIS WORLD. HE SURVEYED THE ASHES AND SKULLS THAT HAD MIXED IN THE POWDER OF BROKEN CEMENT, HE LOOKED UPON THE DEAD THING...

THERE IS NO MORE BEAUTY. NO MORE LOVE! LIFE MEANS... NOTHING!!

WHAT YOU SAY, ALEC?

OH NOTHING, SHOAT, YES... YOU DID GOOD, SHOAT. WE GO TO THE FOREST NOW.


BY THE NEXT AFTERNOON, THEY WERE RUNNING FULL SPEED THROUGH AN ENDLESS FIELD OF YELLOW GRASS. THEIR GOAL SEEMED ALWAYS A MIRAGE... NEVER NEAR... ALWAYS THERE.
THERE, ALEC... ACROSS THE MEADOW...
IS THAT THE PLACE? THE FOREST...

IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE ALEC HAD SEEN TREES THAT WERE NOT SCORCHED AND TWISTED... EMPTY OF THEIR LEAVES.
TREES, ALEC... REAL TREES... AND... LISTEN...
IT SOUNDS LIKE... WATER RUNNING WATER!

OH LOOK ALEC...
NO! YOU MUSTN'T...

THERE IS NO BEAUTY!!

NO BEAUTY ANY MORE...

WE CANNOT FORGET WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE... EVER!
SEE ALEC... THERE...

KILL, ALEC... SHOAT, KILL?
NO, SHOAT... LATER PERHAPS.

IT WAS ALMOST A FOUNTAIN... BUBBLING IN GENTLE RIPPLES FROM THE GROUND. ALEC THOUGHT HE FELT THE MEANING OF IT... THE WATER SEEMED TO WHISPER TO HIM.
SEE HOW PRETTY... CAN WE TASTE IT ALEC?
ME THIRSTY... ME TAKE A DRINK, ALEC?
BE CAREFUL SHOAT!

ALEC TRIED TO READ THE SYMBOLS GOUGED INTO THE THICK, BLACK BARK. HE KNEW THEY MEANT A MESSAGE.
THE PARENT CREATURES DID THIS, THEY ARE THE WRITERS OF THINGS SOOOO-AL POOO-AL...
WHAT DOES IT MEAN, ALEC..?
SOUL POOL

SOUL-POOL. I'M NOT SURE, JEANNIE, MAYBE IT'S THE NAME OF THIS PLACE.
ALEC, COME HERE!
SOUL POOL
PEEP! PEEP! PEEP! CHEE-CHEEK! GLEEP!

IT WAS AS THOUGH THE TINY CREATURES HAD COME TO MEET THEM, WRIGGLING AROUND THEIR FEET AND CROAKING WITH LOUD, THROBBING MOANS.
SOMETHING IS BAD HERE... WE MUST RUN!
THAT SOUND... IT HURTS MY EARS!
GROOP! CHEE! CHEE CHROOP-GLEEP!
GLEEP! CROAK! GREEP! BRROAK!

I FIX JEANNIE...
SHOAT... NO, SHOAT... NO!!
PEEP! CHEEP! PEEP! GROOP! PEEP! OOOK!
GLEEP! KRROAK! EEEK! GROO-
PEEP! CHEE-CHEEP! OOOK OEEEP

PEEP! CHEE-CHEE-CHEEK!
PEEP! -OKE GLEEEEP
PEEP!

NO SOONER HAD SHOAT'S SPEAR SNUFFED OUT THE LITTLE LIFE... THAN THE CROAKING CREATURES DISSAPEARED INTO THE SHIMMERING POOL.
THIS PLACE IS EVIL..!! SHOAT KILL!
WAIT! SHOAT... DON'T...

I SEE THEM... ALL OF THEM... THERE ON THE BOTTOM OF THE...
SHOAT... BE CAREFUL!

BUT SHOAT WAS HYPNOTIZED IN THE QUIVERING REFLECTIONS OF THE POOL. HIS EYES SEEMED GRASPED WITHIN IT'S POWER... AND IN THE NEXT MOMENT...
... MUST SEE WHAT IS BEYOND... MUST!!

SPLASH!

HE FELT HIMSELF SINKING... NEARER AND NEARER THE GLOWING GREEN BOTTOM. HIS LUNGS SEEMED UNCHANGED BY THE FLOOD OF WATER FILLING THEM...
LIKE GREEN FIRE...
POISON!!

SHOAT COULD NOT STRUGGLE AGAINST THE SUCKING WATER THAT PULLED UPON HIS BODY... AND AS HE OPENED HIS MOUTH TO SCREAM... HE LOST HIMSELF IN THE FLASH OF SPARKLING BUBBLES THAT ENVELOPED HIM.

FAR ABOVE, WHILE JEANNIE AND ALEC SEARCHED THE SUDDENLY STILL WATER, FOR SIGNS OF SHOAT... THE FRAGILE GIRL TUGGED SOFTLY ON ALEC'S TATTERED SHIRT.
WE WILL NOT SEE HIM AGAIN, ALEC?
NO, JEANNIE... WE WILL NOT SEE HIM AGAIN.
SHOAT KEPT RISING, NEARER AND NEARER HE KNEW THE SURFACE WOULD BECOME, HE THOUGHT HE COULD SEE JEANNIE'S BLURRY FORM ABOVE HIM, HE WAS RETURNING!
HE HAD TO WARN THEM... NOW THAT HE KNEW WHAT WAS DOWN THERE, ALEC... JEANNIE... HE COULD SEE THEM, BUT THEY LOOKED SO STRANGE...
ALEC...! THAT WAS STRANGE, SHOAT COULD ONLY THINK THE WORDS, WHY DIDN'T THEY SEE HIM... THEN SUDDENLY HE KNEW... OPENING HIS LITTLE GREEN MOUTH TO WARN THEM!
SPLOP!
DROOD-LE! BAR-OOP! SHOAT WATCHED HIS FRIENDS TURN, TO DISSAPEAR MOMENTS LATER, IN THE GLOWING FOREST FOLIAGE,
HE WAS HAPPY THAT THEY WOULD BE SAFE, BUT THEN HE LOOKED TOWARD THE LITTLE FROG HE HAD SLAIN EARLIER, AND WAS REMINDED OF WHAT HE HAD BECOME.
HE COULD NOT WATCH ANY LONGER AS THE MURDERED FROG THING, ASSUMED THE FORM OF A HUMAN. HE WAS WORRIED... COULD ALEC AND JEANNIE SURVIVE NOW... WITHOUT HIM?
THE END
COUGH! GAG! EXCUSE ME GIGGLE GROUP, I GOT A FROG IN MY THROAT! ANYWAY... NEXT TIME YOU GO CAMPING, BE CAREFUL YOU DON'T CRUSH ANY CRAWLING CREATURES... MIGHT BE SOMEBODY'S FRIEND! HIC!

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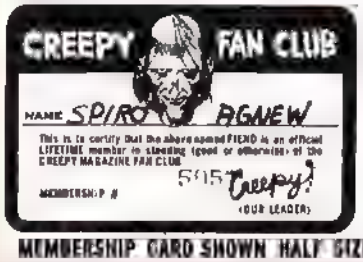

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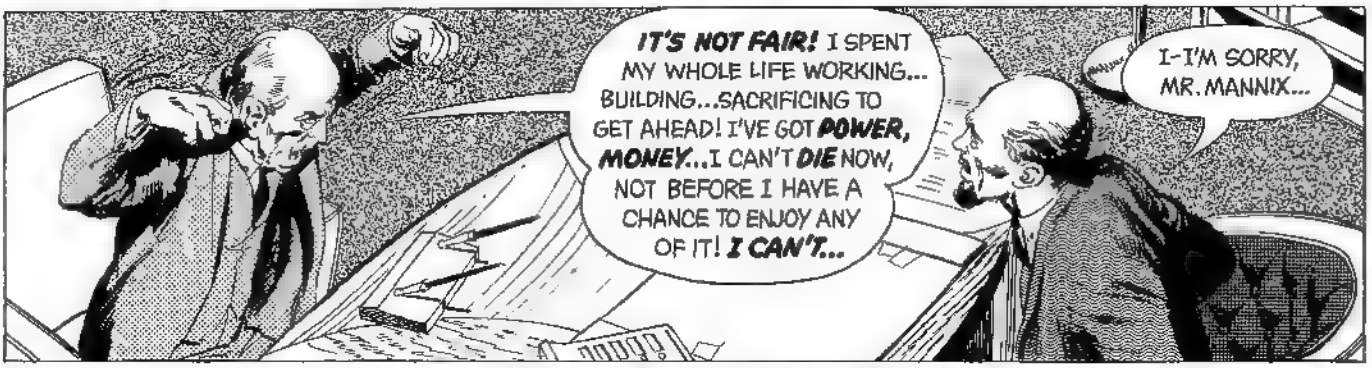
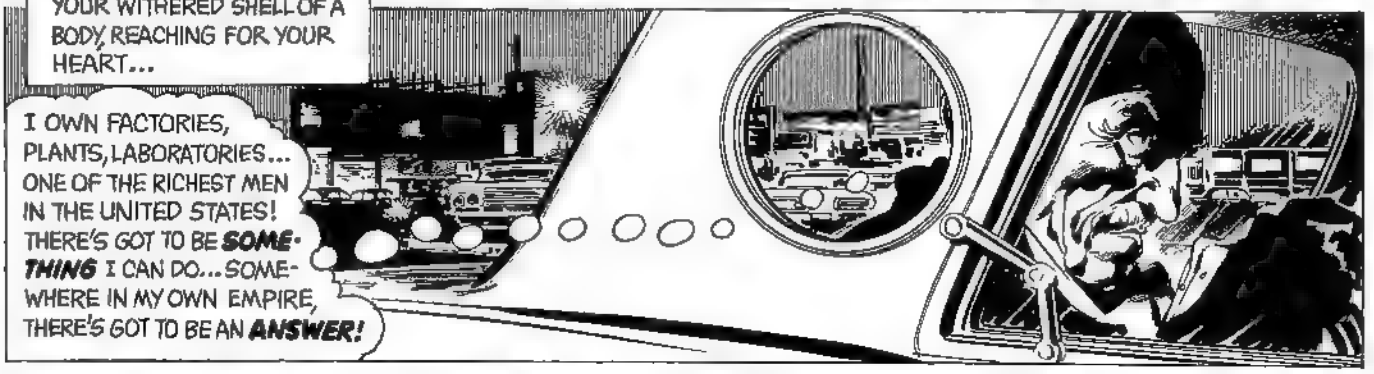
 ART BY NEAL ADAMS/SCRIPT BY ARCHIE GOODWIN

THAT'S WHY YOU'RE GETTING **THIS,** COURTNEY! THE BULK OF MY FORTUNE...DON'T THINK ABOUT MURDER ...THINK ABOUT THE CAREER YOU CAN HAVE WITH THIS BEHIND YOU!
I—I NEVER DREAMED THEY EVEN PRINTED BILLS OF THAT DENOMINATION...
...**I'LL DO IT!** BUT IT'S GOING TO BE RISKY, MR. MANNIX. I WARNED YOU BEFORE, I'VE ONLY EXPERIMENTED...
AT MY AGE, COURTNEY, I CAN'T LOSE! JUST MAKE SURE MY FELLOW GUINEA PIG'S IN GOOD HEALTH, WHILE I GET READY...
YOU CHOSE QUITE WELL, MR. MANNIX... HE'S IN REMARKABLE CONDITION! SURPRISINGLY SO CONSIDERING THE POTENCY OF THE DRUG...
FOR A WHILE I THOUGHT IT WASN'T GOING TO WORK... AND I GAVE HIM ENOUGH TO PUT A HERD OF ELEPHANTS INTO A COMA...
...LET'S GET STARTED BEFORE HE PULLS OUT OF IT!
THERE'S STILL TIME TO RECONSIDER, MR. MANNIX...
THE ONLY THING I MIGHT RECONSIDER IS THE AMOUNT I'M PAYING YOU, COURTNEY... **GET ON WITH IT!** I'VE GOTTEN VERY SICK OF THIS BODY IN A LIFETIME...
VERY WELL, MR. MANNIX...
...IT WON'T BURDEN YOU MUCH LONGER!
THE SLOW HISS OF GAS BEGINS TO THUNDER IN YOUR EARS, AND YOUR MIND GIVES IN TO A KALEIDOSCOPE OF THOUGHT AND MEMORY...

...AND YOU LEAVE THE PRESENT, RETREATING IN TIME TO ANOTHER DAY, AND ANOTHER DOCTOR...
...DIE? I'M GOING TO DIE?! B-BUT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOUGH... HEALTHY...
MR. MANNIX, AT YOUR AGE, THE BODY IS FAILING, DETERIORATING ...IT DOESN'T FIGHT DISEASE AS IT USED TO...YOU ASKED FOR THE TRUTH...AT BEST, YOU HAVE, PERHAPS... A YEAR...


IT'S NOT FAIR! I SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE WORKING... BUILDING...SACRIFICING TO GET AHEAD! I'VE GOT POWER, MONEY...I CAN'T DIE NOW, NOT BEFORE I HAVE A CHANCE TO ENJOY ANY OF IT! I CAN'T...
I-I'M SORRY, MR. MANNIX...

I WON'T ACCEPT IT! I DIDN'T GET TO WHERE I AM TODAY BY GIVING UP! SOME WAY, SOMEHOW, I'LL GET AROUND THIS JUST LIKE I HAVE EVERYTHING ELSE!
AGAIN, YOU CAN FEEL THE ANGER, THE FRUSTRATION, THE FEAR THAT GRIPPED YOU ON THAT DAY, CLAWING AT YOUR WITHERED SHELL OF A BODY, REACHING FOR YOUR HEART...


I OWN FACTORIES, PLANTS, LABORATORIES... ONE OF THE RICHEST MEN IN THE UNITED STATES! THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING I CAN DO...SOMEWHERE IN MY OWN EMPIRE, THERE'S GOT TO BE AN ANSWER!

AGAIN, YOU SPEND THE HOURS, WEEKS, MONTHS IN THE DESPERATE, AGONIZING SEARCH, NEVER RELAXING OR RELENTING UNTIL FINALLY...
...COURTNEY! RALPH COURTNEY! A DOCTOR KICKED OUT OF OUR RESEARCH DIVISION FOR HIS UNORTHODOX AND RADICAL EXPERIMENTS...ESPECIALLY IN SURGERY!

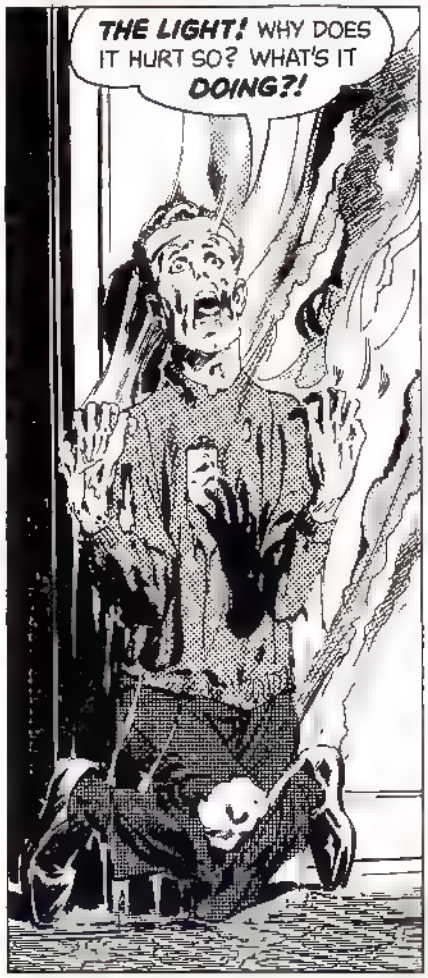
YOU REMEMBER THE SHABBY OFFICE, THE NOISE AND CLATTER OF THE TEST ANIMALS, COURTNEY'S VACILLATING VAGUENESS...
...OF COURSE THE TRANSPLANTS HAVE HAD A DEGREE OF SUCCESS WITH ANIMALS, MR. MANNIX...BUT WHAT YOU SUGGEST! I DON'T SEE HOW I...
I'VE READ YOUR NOTES AND MADE MY OFFER, COURTNEY! YOU KNOW YOU WON'T TURN IT DOWN...YOU CAN'T! ONCE THE LAB IS COMPLETED, WE'LL BEGIN...
B-BUT IT'S NOT JUST YOU... THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER PERSON! NO ONE WOULD VOLUNTARILY...
THAT, I'LL TAKE CARE OF PERSONALLY!
YOU BEGAN A NEW SEARCH, THE MOST CAREFUL AND IMPORTANT SEARCH OF YOUR LIFE...A SEARCH FOR THE PERSON YOU WERE GOING TO BECOME...
HIM AGAIN! IN HERE ALMOST EVERY NIGHT... ALWAYS ALOOF, NO APPARENT FRIENDS...
...YOUNG, BUT POWERFUL AND STRONG! SEEMS TO BE JUST WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR...
...YET, HE HAS LOOKS... ATTRACTIVE TO WOMEN...

LIVES ALONE, NO PERMANENT ASSOCIATIONS, NO RELATIVES... EVERYTHING I'M SEEKING... AND HE'LL NEVER BE MISSED!
NOW, YOUR MIND BRINGS BACK NIGHT AFTER NIGHT AS YOU SLINKED IN SHADOWS AND DOORWAYS, FOLLOWING, OBSERVING...
WITH THE DECISION MADE, YOU WASTED NO TIME...ACTING AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY...
COURTNEY SAID A FEW DROPS WOULD DO THE TRICK, BUT WHY TAKE CHANCES...THAT WINE HE DRINKS IS THICK AND DARK ENOUGH TO COVER ANYTHING...
THEN, YOU WAIT... LONG, TORTUROUS MOMENTS... WONDERING WHERE, WHEN, IT WOULD HAPPEN...
LORD! WHAT A SYSTEM HE MUST HAVE...I THOUGHT THE DRUG WOULD NEVER REACT!
EVERYTHING ELSE WENT SMOOTHLY. THE MEN YOU HAD HIRED HANDLED THEIR END WITHOUT A HITCH. THE PRICE YOU PAID THEM, LEFT NO QUESTION AS TO THEIR FUTURE SILENCE ON THE MATTER. ALL THAT REMAINED WAS THE OPERATION... ALL THAT REMAINED WAS COURTNEY'S FAILURE OR...

NOW, YOU HEAR THE VOICE...CALLING YOU BACK FROM YOUR THOUGHTS, BACK TO THE PRESENT...
THERE IS NO NEED TO SEE... YOU CAN FEEL! THE STRENGTH, THE VITALITY OF YOUTH...
THERE'S A MIRROR AROUND SOME PLACE... WHERE'D I PUT THAT MIRROR...?
...SUCCESS! I-IT'S A SUCCESS, MR. MANNIX...I DID IT! YOUR BRAIN TRANSFERRED TO HIS BODY! WAIT'LL YOU SEE, YOU'VE GOT TO SEE...
I'M FREE! FREE OF THAT DYING SHELL MY BRAIN WAS IMPRISONED IN... A WHOLE NEW LIFE AHEAD OF ME...
ONLY AS YOU MOVE ACROSS THE LABORATORY, STEATHILY, SILENTLY, DO YOU BEGIN TO FEEL THE WEAKNESS, A SLIGHT NAUSEA AND VERTIGO ...STILL YOU DRIVE YOURSELF FORWARD...
YOU'VE GOT TO SEE YOURSELF, MR. MANNIX... YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT TILL YOU SEE IT...
...A NEW LIFE THAT'S GOING TO NEED LOTS OF MONEY...COURTNEY'S MONEY!
THEN, AS YOU LUNGE, THE BLACKNESS SWIRLS UP ENVELOPING ALL IN YOUR VISION AND YOU DRIFT INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS...
ONCE AGAIN, REALITY REACHES OUT FOR YOU, PULLING YOU BACK...
...MANNIX? NOOoOoO!
HA! I MANAGED TO FINISH THE JOB ON COURTNEY EVEN WHILE BLACKED OUT! GUESS I GOT UP TOO SOON AFTER THE OPERATION...FEEL PRETTY GOOD NOW...

THE NEED FOR URGENCY SEIZES YOU. THE NIGHT IS FADING AND THERE ARE STILL THINGS TO BE DONE...
THIS ALCOHOL OUGHT TO DO THE TRICK ONCE EVERYTHING'S DOUSED WITH IT...
FROM THE DOORWAY, YOU STRIKE AND THROW A MATCH...THE PLACE OF YOUR REBIRTH IS AN INSTANT INFERNO, DEVOURING THE WITHERED REMAINS OF YOUR PAST...
AND YOU DON'T STOP RUNNING UNTIL YOU'RE HOME...AT LEAST THE PLACE THIS BODY CALLED HOME...
ONCE OUTSIDE, YOU RUN...FAST AND FURIOUSLY AS YOUR NEW BODY CAN CARRY YOU... INTO THE SAFETY OF THE SHADOWS...
MADE IT! I CAN HIDE OUT HERE UNTIL I'M READY TO PLAN MY NEXT MOVE...WHERE ARE THE LIGHTS? DON'T SEEM TO BE ANY SWITCHES NEARBY...
NO MATTER! SUN'LL BE UP SOON...I CAN GET SOME LIGHT THROUGH THE WINDOW...
THE START OF A NEW DAY, AND THE START OF A NEW LIFE...NOTHING CAN STOP ME NOW!

SLOWLY, SOFTLY, THE DAWN GROWS AND EXPANDS INTO DAY...THE RAYS OF THE SUN SEEKING YOU OUT, SURROUNDING YOU, BATHING YOU WITH LIGHT...THEN, YOU FEEL THE PAIN...EATING AT YOU, BURNING YOU, ***DESTROYING YOU!***



KANTON BOLTED AROUND THE CORNER OF THE DIRTY TENTAMENT BUILDING AS IF THE DEVIL HIMSELF CHASED HIM. HE KNEW THE AUTHORITIES WERE EFFICIENT, BUT HE HAD NOT EXPECTED THEM TO PICK UP HIS TRAIL SO QUICKLY...

THE OMINOUS RATTLE OF A POLICE ROBOT CHILLED THE BLOOD OF THE FLEEING CRIMINAL. "OVER-RATED TOYS!" THOUGHT KANTON. PERHAPS! BUT THESE SAME TOYS HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THREE OF KANTON'S PREVIOUS HIDEOUTS...

IS HE A MURDERER? A THIEF? A SPY? NO, HE IS NONE OF THESE THINGS...

WHAT HE IS MAY BE CALLED A LIVING ANACHRONISM, A RELIC OF PRIMITIVE AGES THRUST INTO THE ULTRA-SONIC WORLD OF THE FUTURE. HE IS THE MOST DANGEROUS PERSON OF THE NO 21ST CENTURY! HE IS A...

SPACE-AGE VAMPIRE

 ART BY MIKE ROYER/STORY BY JAMES HAGGENMILLER

THE HUNTERS ARE SO SURE OF DESTROYING KANTON **THIS** TIME, THEY GROW CARELESS. THAT IS THEIR **FIRST** MISTAKE...

FOR THE FIEND HAS LIVED OVER 400 YEARS, AND KNOWS HOW TO TURN A HUMAN'S FAULT TO HIS ADVANTAGE...

THE PURSUER ROBOT IS EASILY FOOLED. IT WAS SET ON KANTON'S **HUMAN** VIBRATORY WAVE LEVEL. AS A BAT, THE AUTOMANT'S TRACKING MECHANISM HAD BEEN THROWN OFF COMPLETELY. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN SET TO TRACK DOWN A BAT IF THE HUMAN PREY DISAPPEARED!

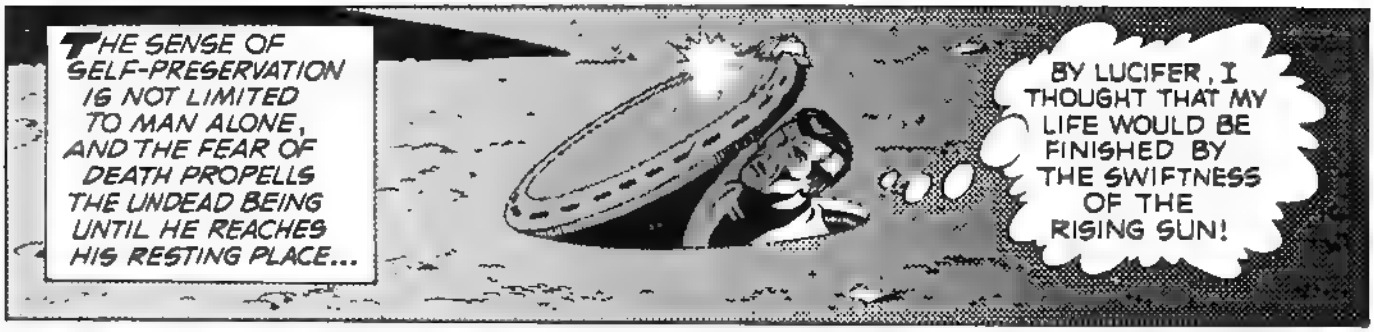
WHIRRRR CLANK

CLOSE! **TOO** CLOSE FOR COMFORT! I MUST GET TO MY CRYPT! **DAYLIGHT** WILL BE SOON UPON ME!

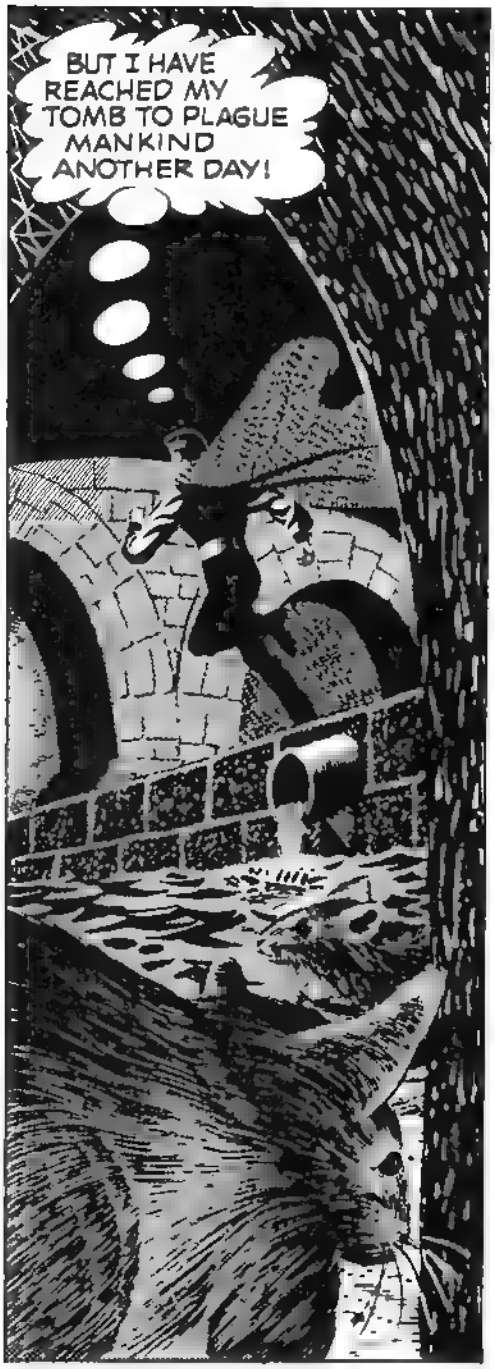
KANTON **MIGHT** HAVE BEEN CAUGHT, BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IN 200 YEARS THAT THE HUMANS HAD DEALT WITH A VAMPIRE, AND THE KNOWLEDGE TO COMBAT SUCH CREATURES WAS FORGOTTEN IN MUSTY OLD BOOKS, LONG IGNORED.

BUT HUMANS LEARN QUICKLY, AND THEY GET CLOSER WITH EACH ATTACK. ONLY FOOLISH MISTAKES, LIKE THAT ONE SAVED KANTON FROM THE ETERNAL SLEEP OF THE UNDEAD...

I MUST REACH MY COFFIN BEFORE THE CURSED SUNLIGHT LEAVES ME A PILE OF ROTTING CARRION!



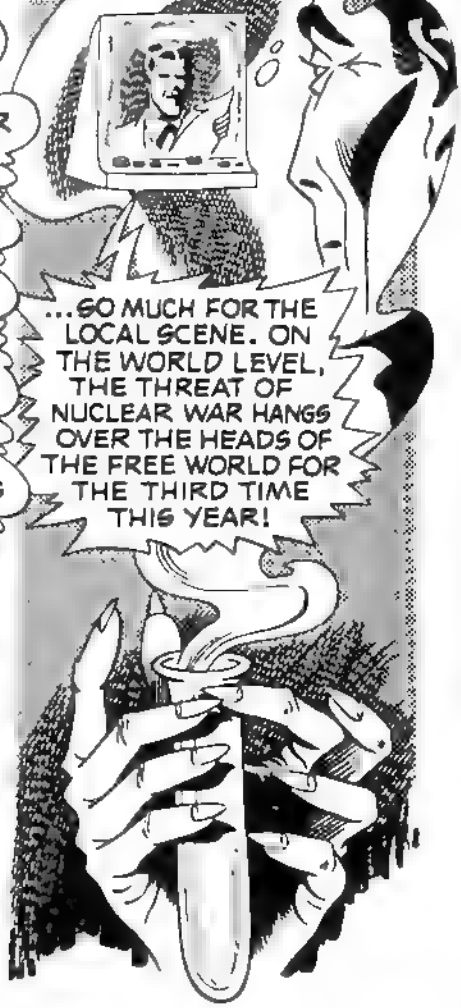
THE ROTTING USELESS CONDUITS HAVE BEEN LONG FORGOTTEN BY THE 21ST CENTURY MAN. REPLACED BY NUCLEAR WASTE DISPOSAL, THEY REMAIN USELESS TO ALL EXCEPT A CREATURE OF THE DARK ... LIKE KANTON!



THE DANGER-WROUGHT MINUTES OF THE PAST ARE FORGOTTEN ONCE THE FUGITIVE VAMPIRE REACHES HIS LAIR. HERE HE IS KING, HERE HE NEED NOT RUN...

WITH MECHANICAL EFFICIENCY, KANTON BEGINS TO PREPARE HIS FORMULA. EVIL POTIONS OF LONG-GONE EONS ARE ADDED TO THE FUMING TEST-TUBE, CREATING THE SALVATION...OR DEATH OF KANTON!

STARING DEEP INTO THE ACRID CLOUDS THAT RISE FROM THE FUMING CONTAINER, KANTON CAN SEE THE EVENTS WHICH LED TO HIS PLAN FOR SURVIVAL...



...THIS TIME THE U.S.S.R. CLAIMS SEVERAL ROCKET-CARS FLEW OVER THE TOP-SECRET MISSILE PLANTS NEAR BRODVICH. WE CLAIM IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. THE U.N. IS TRYING TO HEAL THE BREAK, BUT...
...THE U.S.S.R. WANTS WAR, CLAIMING THAT THE ROCKET-CAR INCIDENT WAS A PRELUDE TO AN ATTACK BY AMERICA. THE U.N. SEEMS UNABLE TO HELP. WE CAN ONLY HOPE THE SOVIET OFFICIALS WILL...
THAT'S MY OUT! THIS CRISIS HAS GIVEN ME AN IDEA!
SO, KANTON WORKED CONTINUOUSLY, USING EVERY WAKING MOMENT TO PERFECT THE SUSPENDED ANIMATION SERUM. ALWAYS, THERE HAD BEEN FAILURE, UNTIL NOW...
SUCCESS! I HAVE THE FORMULA! NOW FOR THE PROPER MOMENT!
KANTON'S IDEA WAS SIMPLE. IF A VAMPIRE COULDN'T FIND AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF VICTIMS IN THIS TIME, WHY NOT HIBERNATE UNTIL THE HUMAN RACE DESTROYED MOST OF ITSELF AND PREY UPON THE HELPLESS SURVIVORS.

THE SPY CRISIS WAS THAT 'MOMENT'! MANY POLITICAL PROPHETS STATED IT WOULD FLARE INTO A FULL-SCALE WAR! THEIR WORD WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR KANTON. AFTER SWALLOWING THE SMALL AMOUNT OF CHEMICALS, THE SLY VAMPIRE SAID GOOD-BYE TO THE ULTRA-DANGEROUS WORLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY. WHEN HE WAKES, FIVE DECADES HENCE, KANTON EXPECTS A WORLD OF DESOLATION, IN WHICH THE PEOPLE ARE REDUCED TO PRIMITIVES, WITH NO WAY OF HALTING A VAMPIRE...
THE FAITH KANTON HAD IN THE POLITICAL SOOTHSAYERS WAS WELL-FOUNDED. A FEW WEEKS AFTER KANTON'S SELF-IMPOSED COMA, THE LONG FEARED NUCLEAR WAR BEGAN! FIRST, RUSSIA SENT HER MISSILES TO ATTACK...
WITHIN MOMENTS, AMERICAN MISSILES SPANNED THE ATLANTIC IN RETALIATION!
THE EXPECTATIONS OF KANTON COULD NOT HAVE BEEN FULFILLED MORE SATISFACTORILY! BILLIONS LAY DEAD IN THE STREETS AS THE BOMBING ENDURED FIVE ENDLESS DAYS!
TINY GROUPS OF HUMANS HID UNDER-GROUND WITHIN THE VAST COMPLEX OF SUBWAYS AND CONDUITS. WHEN THE BOMBING ENDED, THESE HUMANS WOULD LEAVE TO TRY AND BUILD A NEW WORLD...
ALL THIS HAPPENED, AS KANTON LAY...

FIFTY YEARS PASS. FIFTY YEARS WHICH, KANTON HOPES, HAS ERASED THE THREAT OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY FROM THE EARTH, LEAVING HIM A PRIMITIVE SOCIETY WHICH HE CAN DEAL WITH...

MY LONG SLEEP IS OVER! NOW I WILL SEE IF I HAVE ESCAPED A WORLD OF SCIENTIFIC HORROR!

MY VEINS THIRST FOR BLOOD! I MUST *NOT* BE DEPRIVED MUCH LONGER!

KANTON STOOD AND LOOKED DOWN AT THE RUINS WHICH HAD ONCE BEEN A MIGHTY METROPOLIS. FOR AN INSTANT HE WAS HAPPY. HIS WISH HAD BEEN FULFILLED, BUT WHERE WERE THE PEOPLE?

SPICER

NO LONGER DO I HAVE TO FEAR THE METALLIC TREAD OF A STAKE-FIRING POLICE ROBOT!

AND THEN KANTON'S NOSTRILS TOLD HIM OF ... ***PEOPLE!*** THEIR SCENT SENDING THE STARVING VAMPIRE INTO A FRENZY OF HUNGER! THE SCENT OF FRESH ...

BLOOD! SOME DID SURVIVE! AND ***NONE*** OF THESE PRIMITIVES WILL KNOW HOW TO FIGHT A VAMPIRE!

TO APPROACH THE VICTIMS WITHOUT SUSPICION, THE WILY VILLAIN TRANSFORMS HIMSELF INTO A BAT...

ONLY A FEW MINUTES! ***JUST A FEW MINUTES AND... FOOD!***

HUNGER HAD DRIVEN KANTON NEARLY MAD! HE COULD RESTRAIN HIMSELF NO LONGER, FOR HE NEEDED BLOOD, EVEN IF IT MEANT FRIGHTENING AWAY THE TRIBE OF STRUGGLING HUMANS!

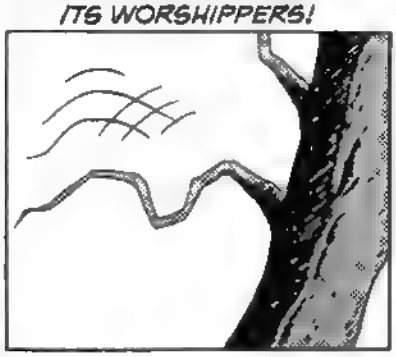
THE SHOCK IS TOO MUCH FOR THE MAN AND THE PAIR FALL TO THE GROUND.

RESUMING HIS HUMAN SHAPE, POWERFUL FINGERS GRIP THE HUMAN'S NECK AS KANTON, NOW DESPERATE, BEARS HIS SHARP FANGS!

GREAT TAKLET, SAVE US FROM THE INTRUDER! DRIVE THE INTRUDER AWAY WITH YOUR MAGIC! WE HAVE GIVEN YOU OUR FAITH, GIVE US OUR LIVES! DESTROY THE INTRUDER!

THOSE *FOOLS*! AS IF THAT TREE OR *ANYTHING* COULD STOP ME NOW!

AS IF IN ANSWER TO THE PRAYERS OF THE PRIMITIVES, A BRANCH OF THE TWISTED PLANT COMES ALIVE, ITS LIMB FEELING FOR THE ENEMY OF ITS WORSHIPPERS!



FASTER THE BRANCH UNCOILS, SNAKING OUTWARD. REACHING ITS PREY, IT WRAPS ITSELF AROUND THE NECK OF KANTON, WHO DROPS HIS INTENDED VICTIM TO FIGHT THIS NEW FOE FOR HIS LIFE!

WHAT IS THIS? NONE OF THESE SAVAGES HAS THE STRENGTH TO—

THAT--THAT TREE—HOW?

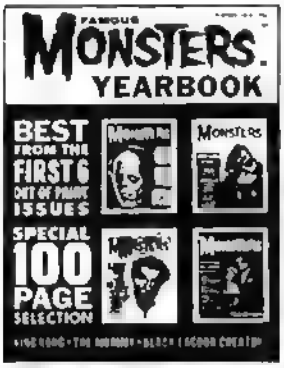
GASP! THAT TREE! I THINK I KNOW ITS SECRET! WHEN THE WORLD WAS DESTROYED BY THE BOMBS, THE HUMANS WERE LEFT <CHOKE, WHEEZE> DEFENSELESS! GASP!

THIS TREE CAN <GASP> ACT ON THE WILLS OF THESE PRIMITIVES!

I-I CAN NOT BREAK THIS THING'S GRIP! <CHOKE> RELEASE ME! RELEASE ME! RELEA- UHHHH!

THUD!

THE STRUGGLING IS OVER, THE VAMPIRE DESTROYED BY THE CREATION OF A DEAD WORLD! A WORLD THAT HAS NO ROOM FOR THE CREATURES OF DEATH THAT SEEK TO DESTROY IT!



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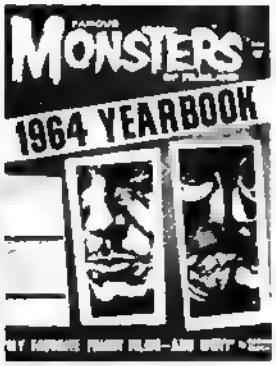

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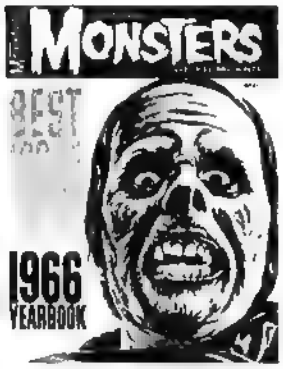

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1967 YEARBOOK

1968 YEARBOOK

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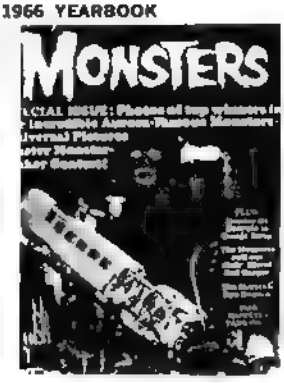

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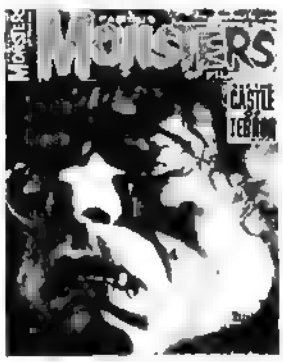

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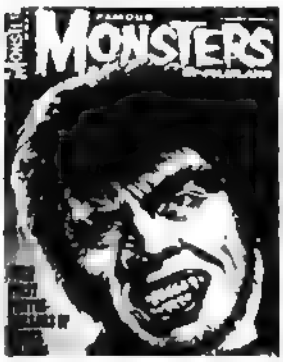

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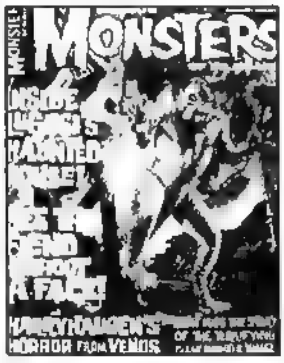

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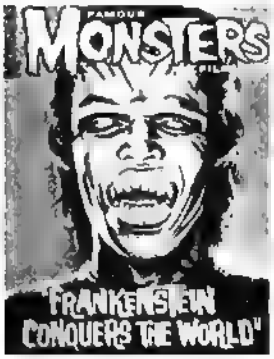

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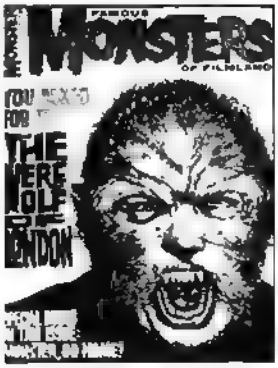

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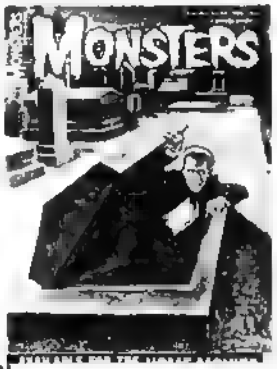

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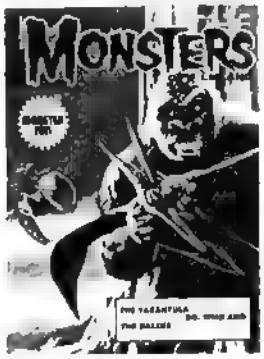

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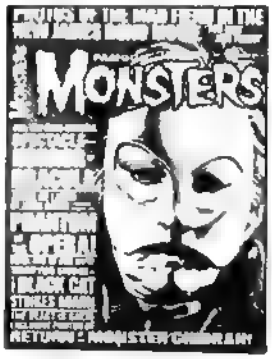

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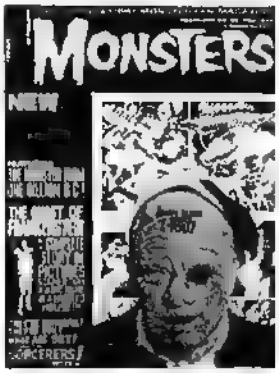

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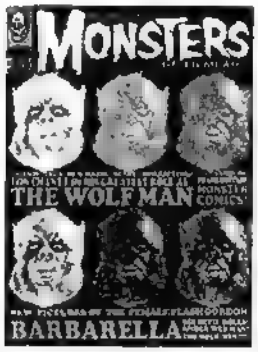

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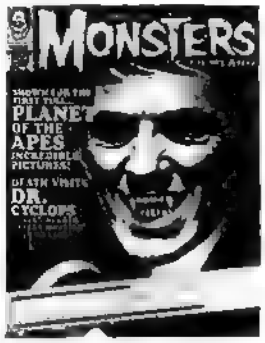

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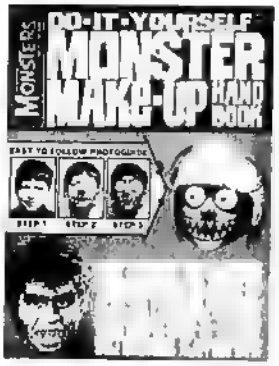

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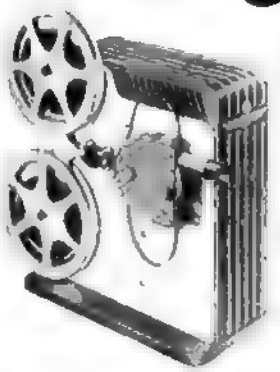

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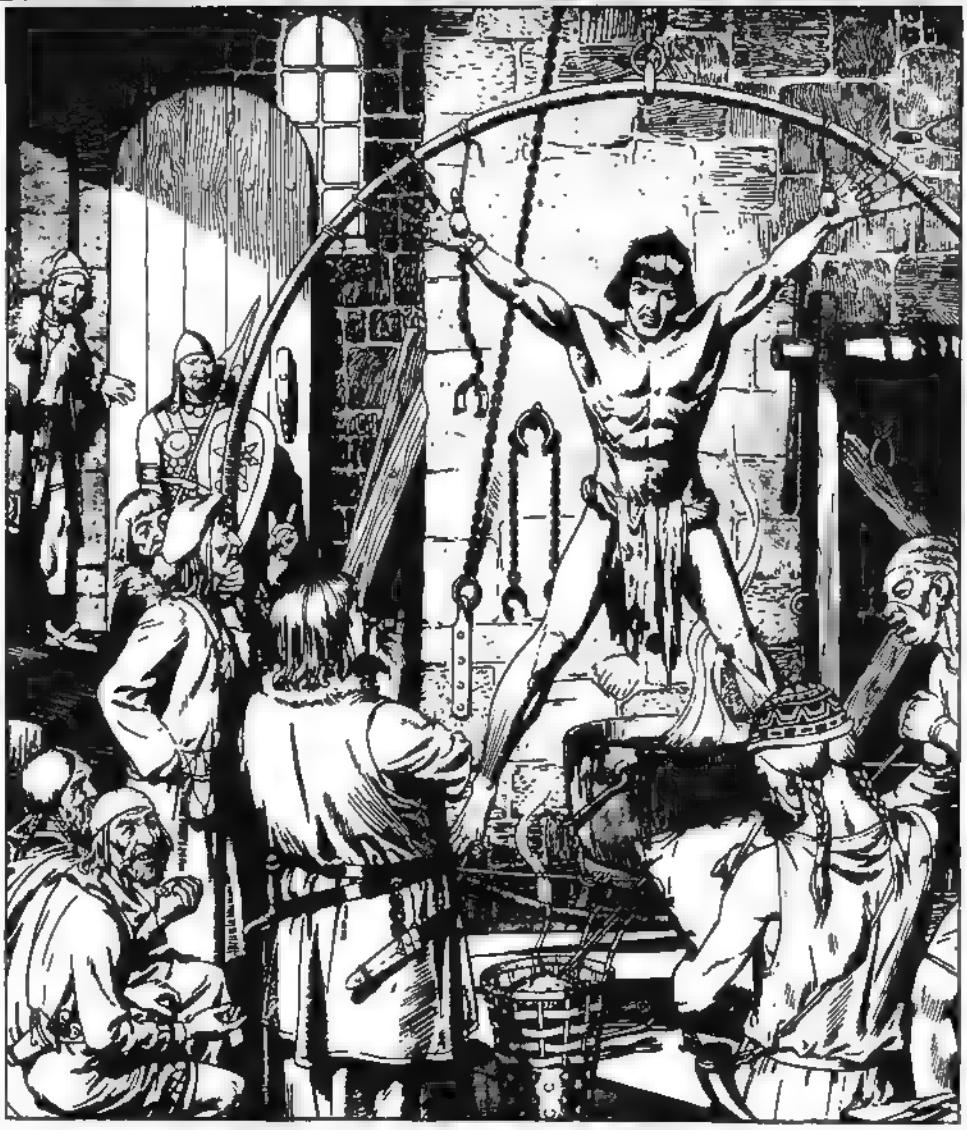

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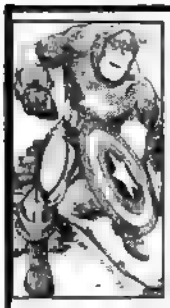

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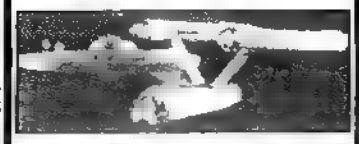

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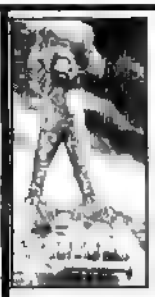

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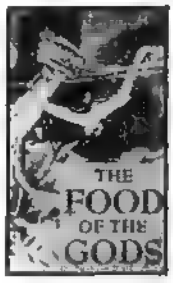

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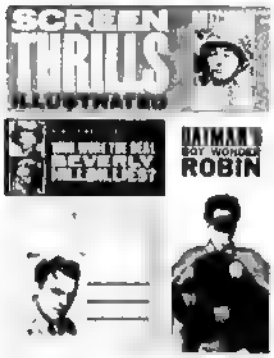

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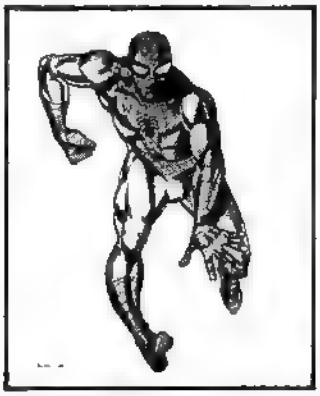

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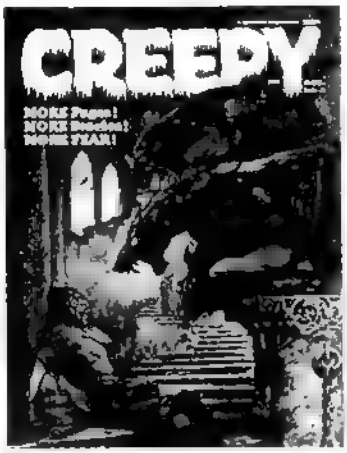

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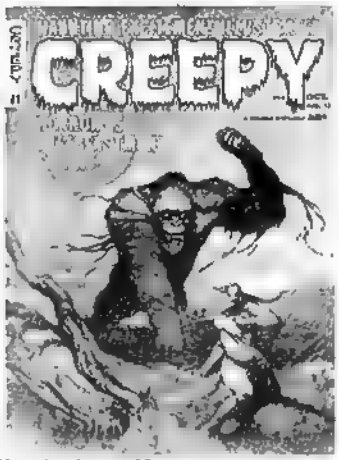

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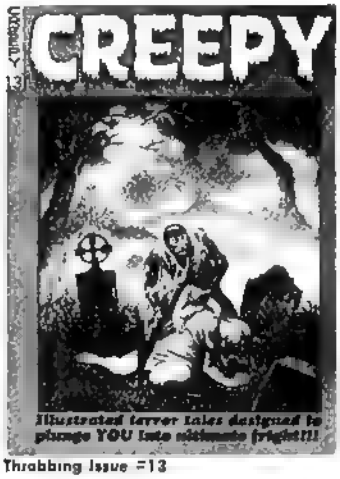

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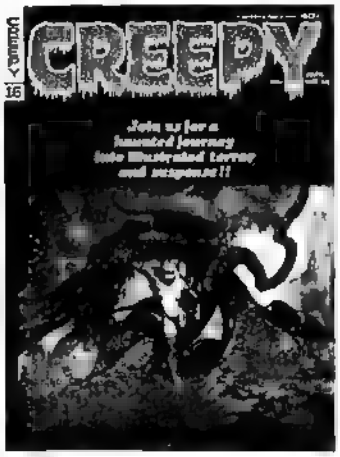

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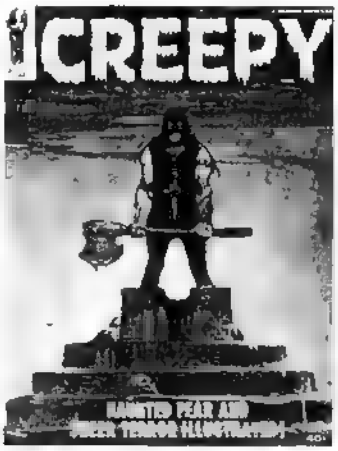

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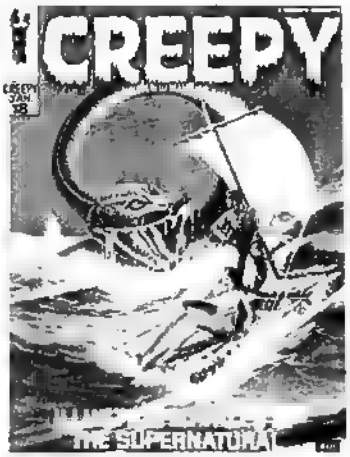

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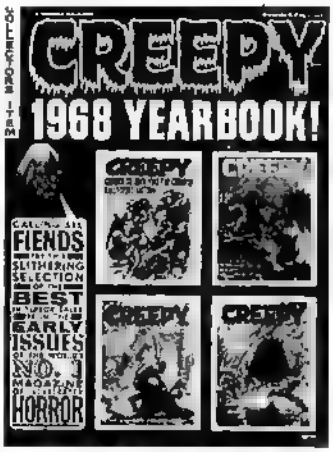

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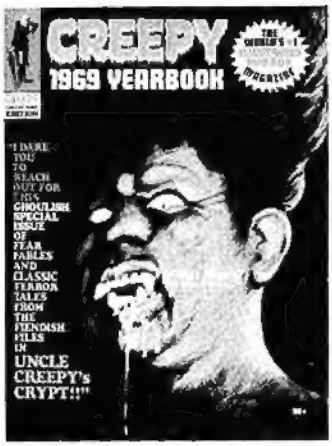

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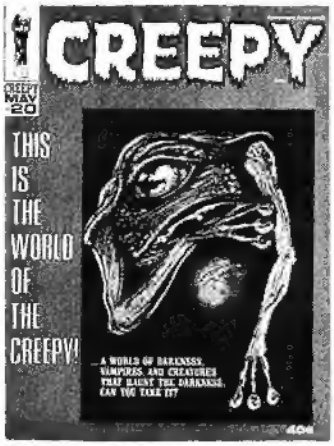

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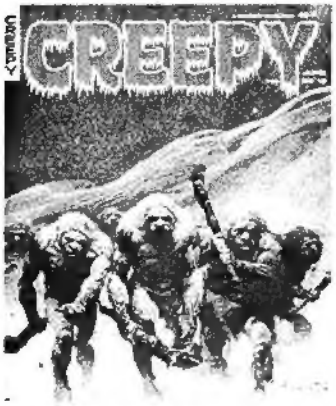

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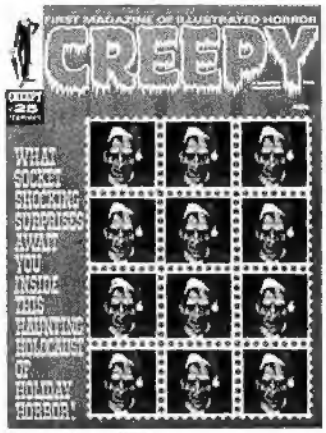

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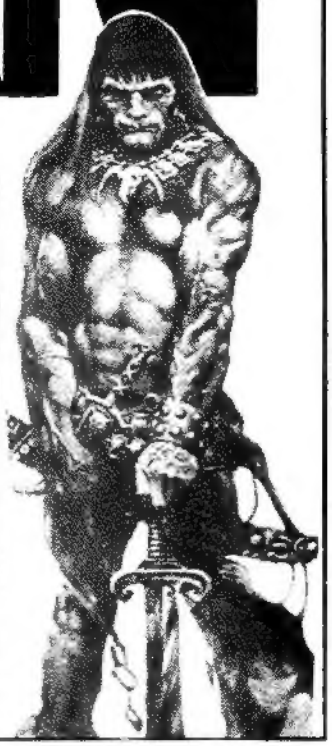

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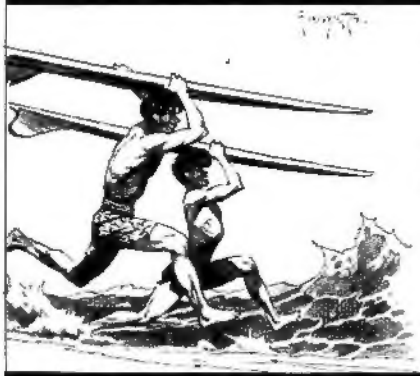

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